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MIDNIGHT
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CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT

THE SECRET SQUADRON VS. THE TERROR OF THE ORIENT

Captain Midnight
and the
Secret Squadron
vs.
The Terror of the Orient

Based on the Famous Radio Series

Story by R. R. WINTERBOTHAM

Illustrated by ERWIN L. HESS

★

WHITMAN PUBLISHING COMPANY
RACINE, WISCONSIN

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Printed in U.S.A.

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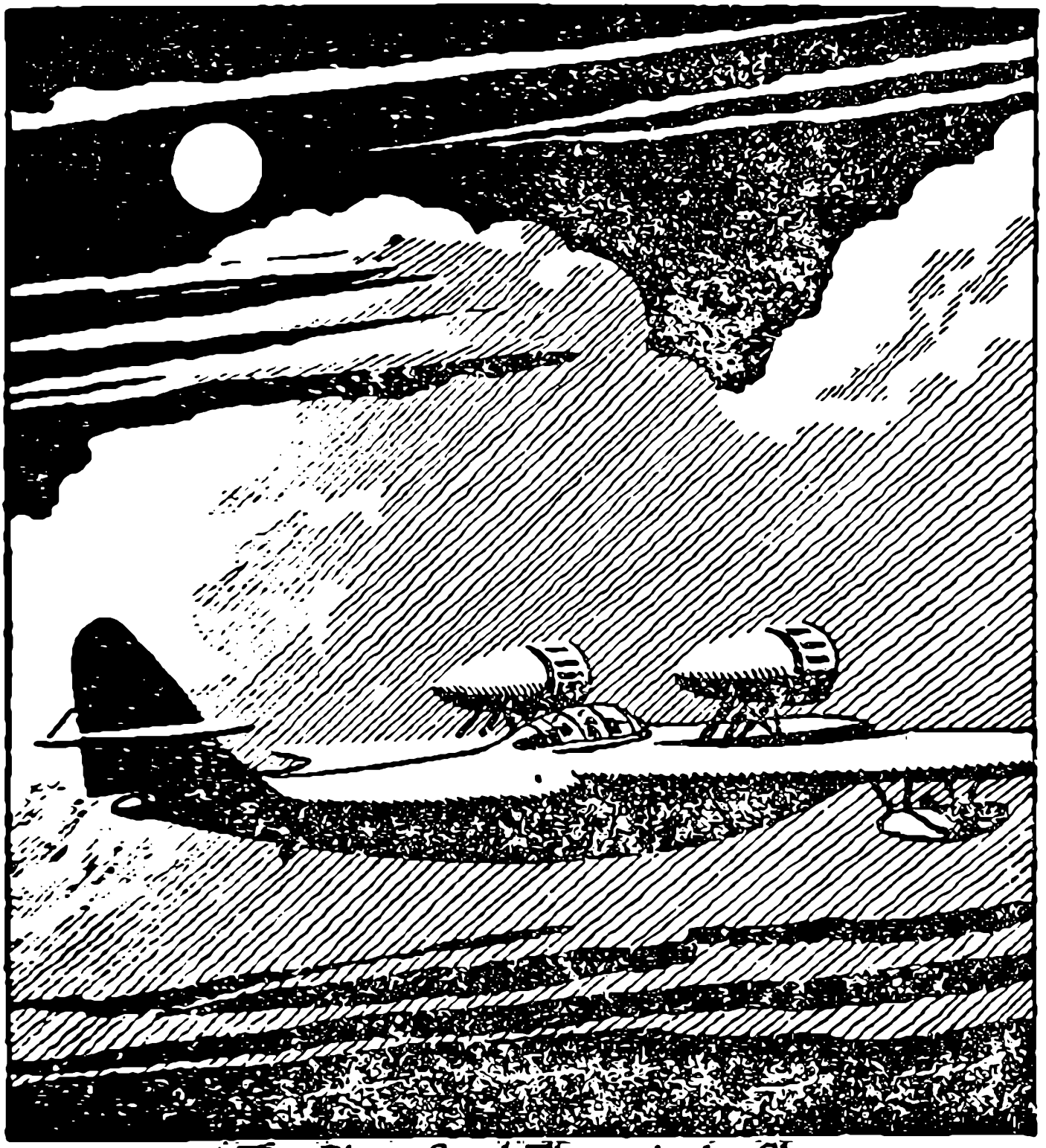


The Plane Sped Through the Sky

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT
and the Secret Squadron

CHAPTER I

ATTACK IN THE SKIES

Through the night a long-range amphibian plane sped through the Oriental sky. At the controls was the man of mystery, Captain Midnight, watching the instrument panel in the cockpit, keeping the craft on an even keel above a thick layer of clouds. He was flying entirely by instrument now, since the

ground was completely hidden by the clouds.

The captain was tall, distinctly military, and clear-eyed. There was a tinge of gray in the black hair that was hidden by his helmet and radiophones. There were grim lines about his mouth. Captain Midnight was not a young pilot, except in his exuberance for flying. In a score of years he had become almost a legendary figure.

Deep in the archives at Wash-

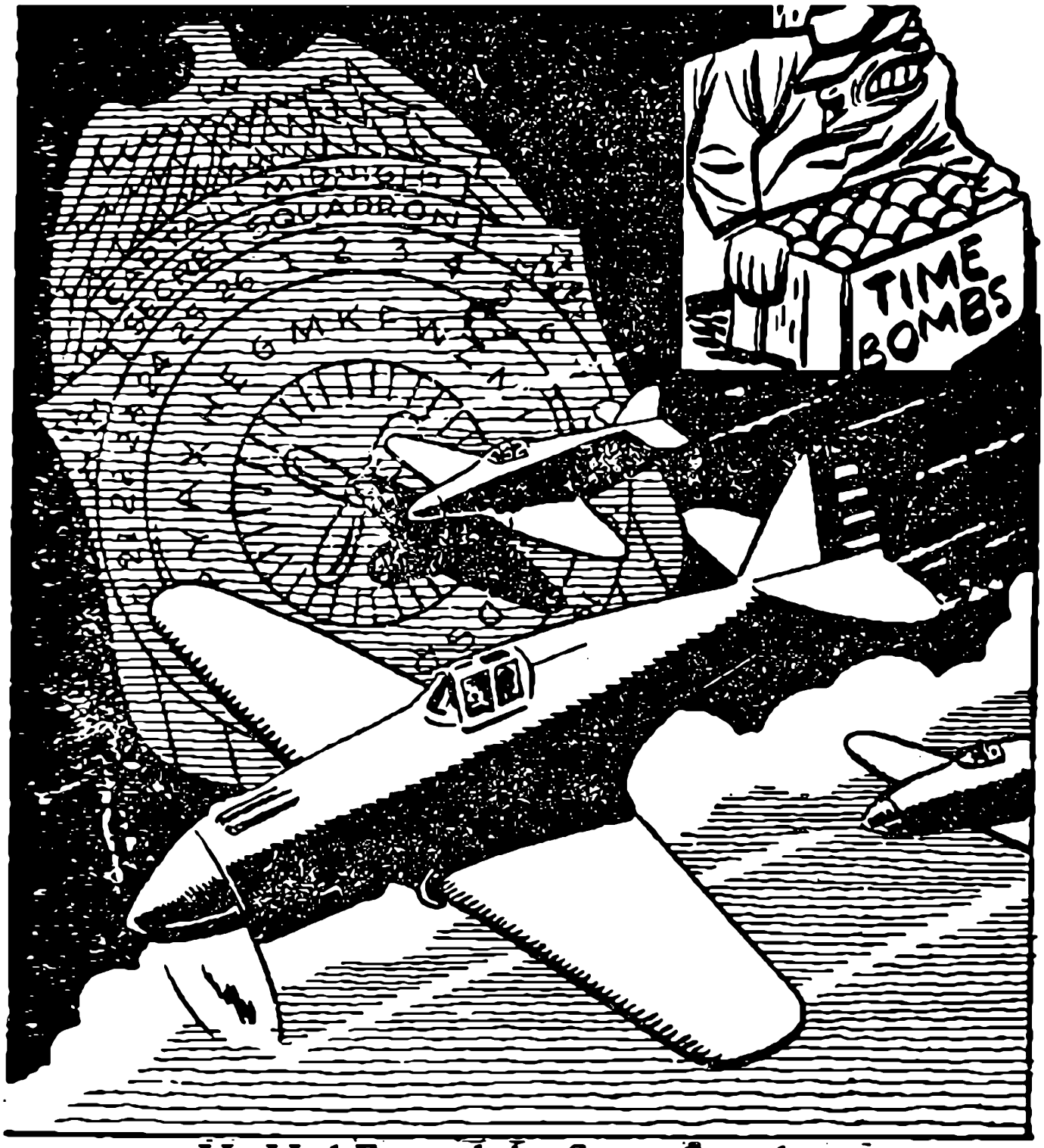
Captain Midnight Was Not Young

ington his real name, Captain Albright, was written where it would never be erased. Those records told of his carrying a vital message through enemy lines at midnight during the first World War, and that message saved the Allies from defeat.

Elsewhere, safe from eyes of foreign spies, it was written that a man known only as Captain Midnight was directing important work in connection with the de-

He Fought in the First World War

fenses of democracy. It was known that scores of former World War fliers had rallied with Captain Midnight to form the Secret Squadron, the sole purpose of which was defense of America from foreign spies and armed enemies. This Secret Squadron was made up only of tried and tested men, hardy adventurers who knew discipline and who lived in an airplane. There were, in addition to the old-timers, many young men



He Had Formed the Secret Squadron

like Chuck Ramsay, who now sat in the co-pilot's seat beside Captain Midnight.

Chuck was youthful, but he could handle an airplane like a veteran. Chuck was stout-hearted and he had a disposition that was steady and strong even under the most trying difficulties.

Between Captain Midnight and Chuck was a girl, Joyce, slender and laughing. She stood slightly behind the two seats in the cockpit,

Chuck Sat in the Co-Pilot's Seat

watching the clouds roll under the amphibian plane.

"It looks as if the world had dropped out from under us," she said.

"You're not afraid, are you, Joyce?" Chuck asked.

"Afraid? Chuck, you know me better than that!"

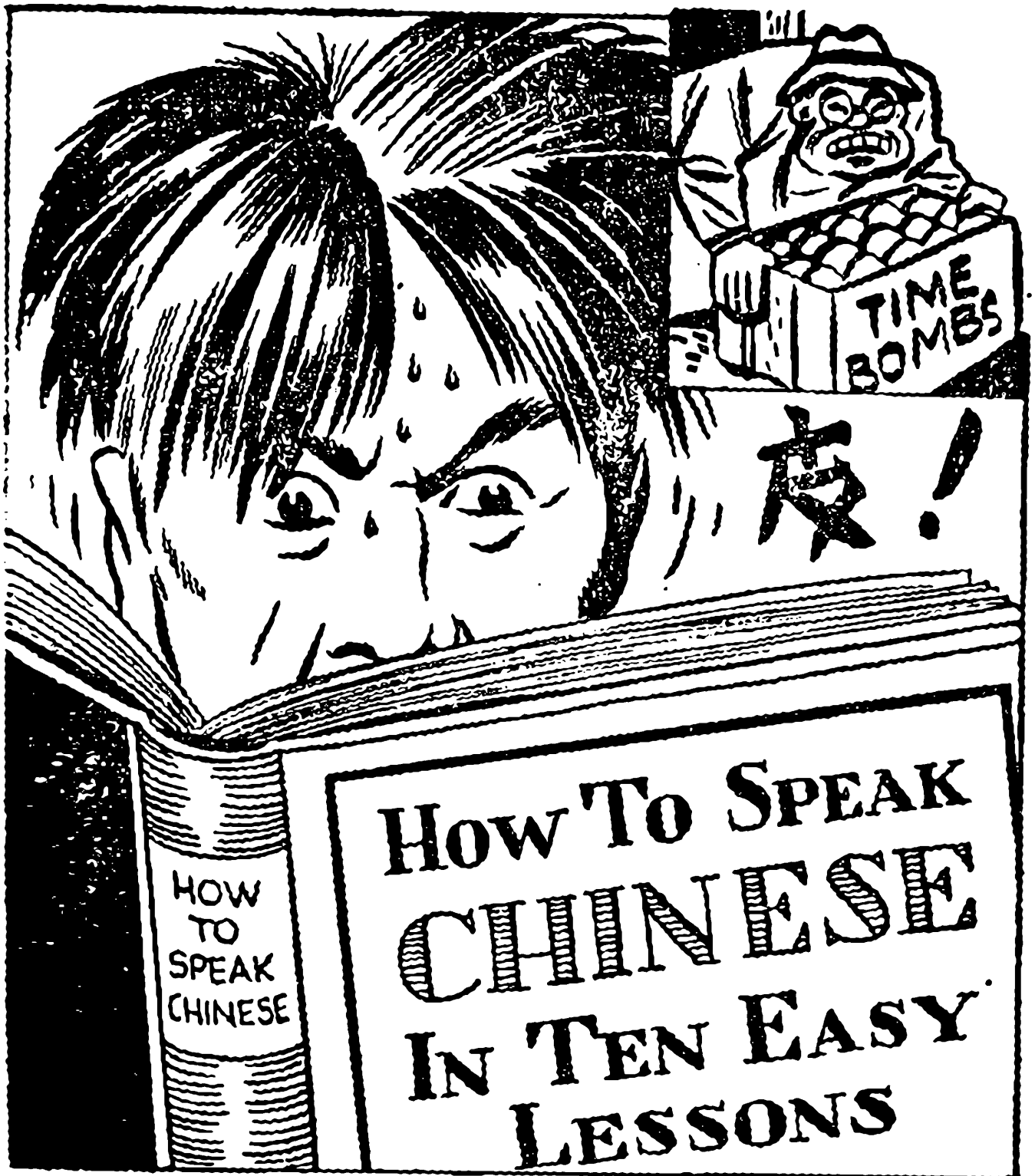
Joyce also was a member of the Secret Squadron.

In the cabin was a fourth member of the daredevil band. He was

Joyce Was Also a Member

a tall, angular fellow, whose hair seemed never to have known a comb. But there was a look about his humorous eyes that showed courage and determination. Here was a man that would enter a lion's den with a smile and a joke. This was Ichabod Mudd, Captain Midnight's faithful greasemonkey.

Ichabod was reading a book of which the title, seen by Joyce when she glanced back from the cockpit, was: "How to Speak Chinese in



Ichabod Mudd Was Studying

Ten Easy Lessons." He seemed oblivious to the talk in the cockpit.

"There's a special reason for flying above the clouds, Joyce," Captain Midnight was explaining, without taking his eyes off the instrument panel. "We're above a region controlled by the Japs and we might run into trouble if we got beneath these clouds."

Joyce nodded. It was hard to believe that this modern plane was high above the land of pagodas,

"We're Traveling Above the Clouds."

halfway around the world from the land of skyscrapers. The flight had been made quickly, with stops only at Honolulu, Manila and Hongkong.

Major Barry Steel, Captain Midnight's World War commander, now a powerful undercover official from Washington, was somewhere in this strange land. Just where, no one knew, but he had been last heard of in Chungking and this was where the amphibian was

They Were Headed for Chungking

headed. Captain Midnight had to locate the major.

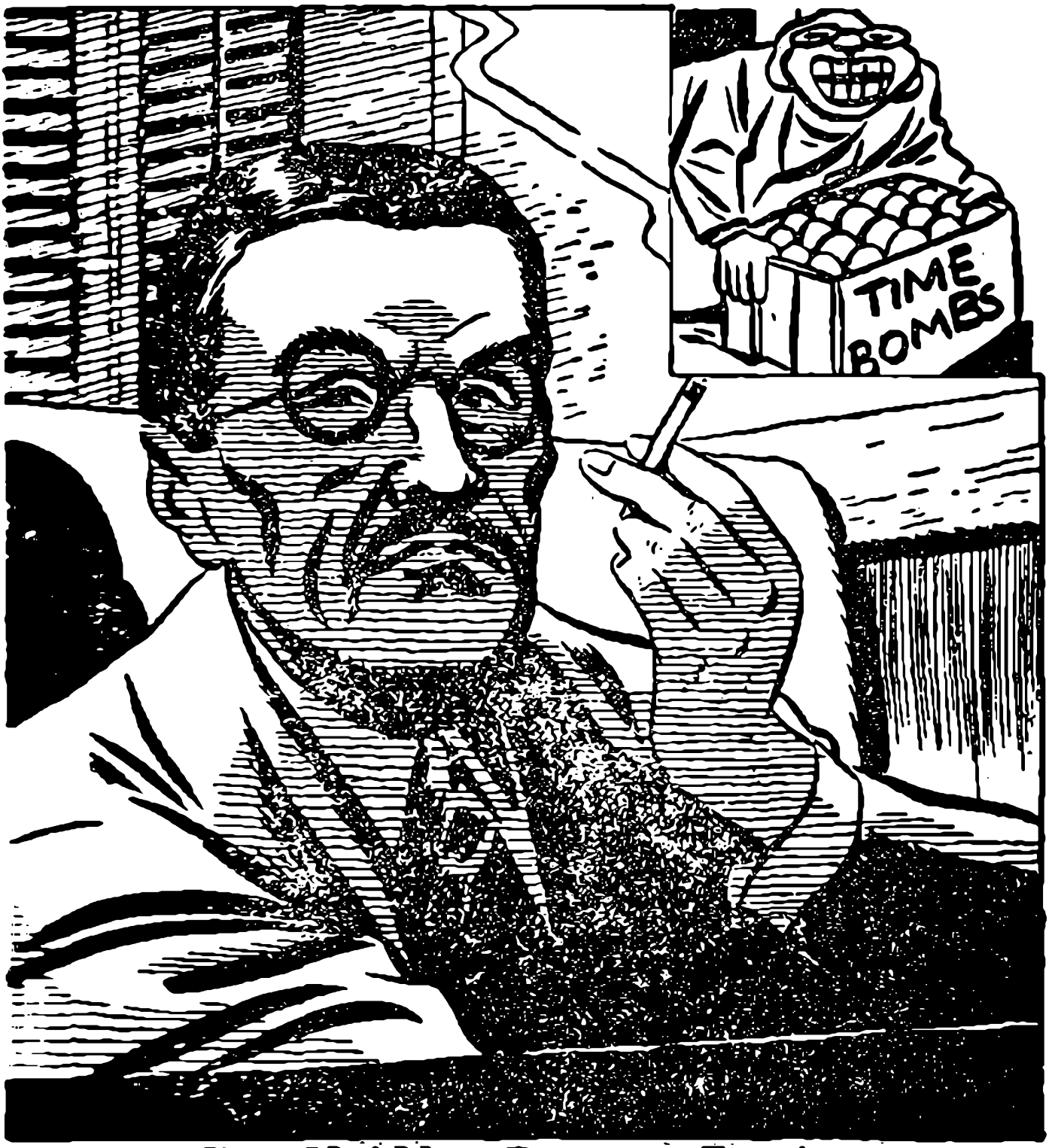
Behind the plane, stretched from Hongkong to Honolulu, based at scores of coral atolls in the Pacific, were agents of the Secret Squadron, ready to aid when they were called upon.

"It might not be hard to find the major, Chuck." Captain Midnight spoke, his thoughts on his mission. "I've been in China before and I've friends in the Chinese government

They Took a Direct Route From Manila

who will help us. Every loyal Chinese knows that the United States is supporting China in its fight for freedom. I'm sure we'll have cooperation in trying to find Major Steel."

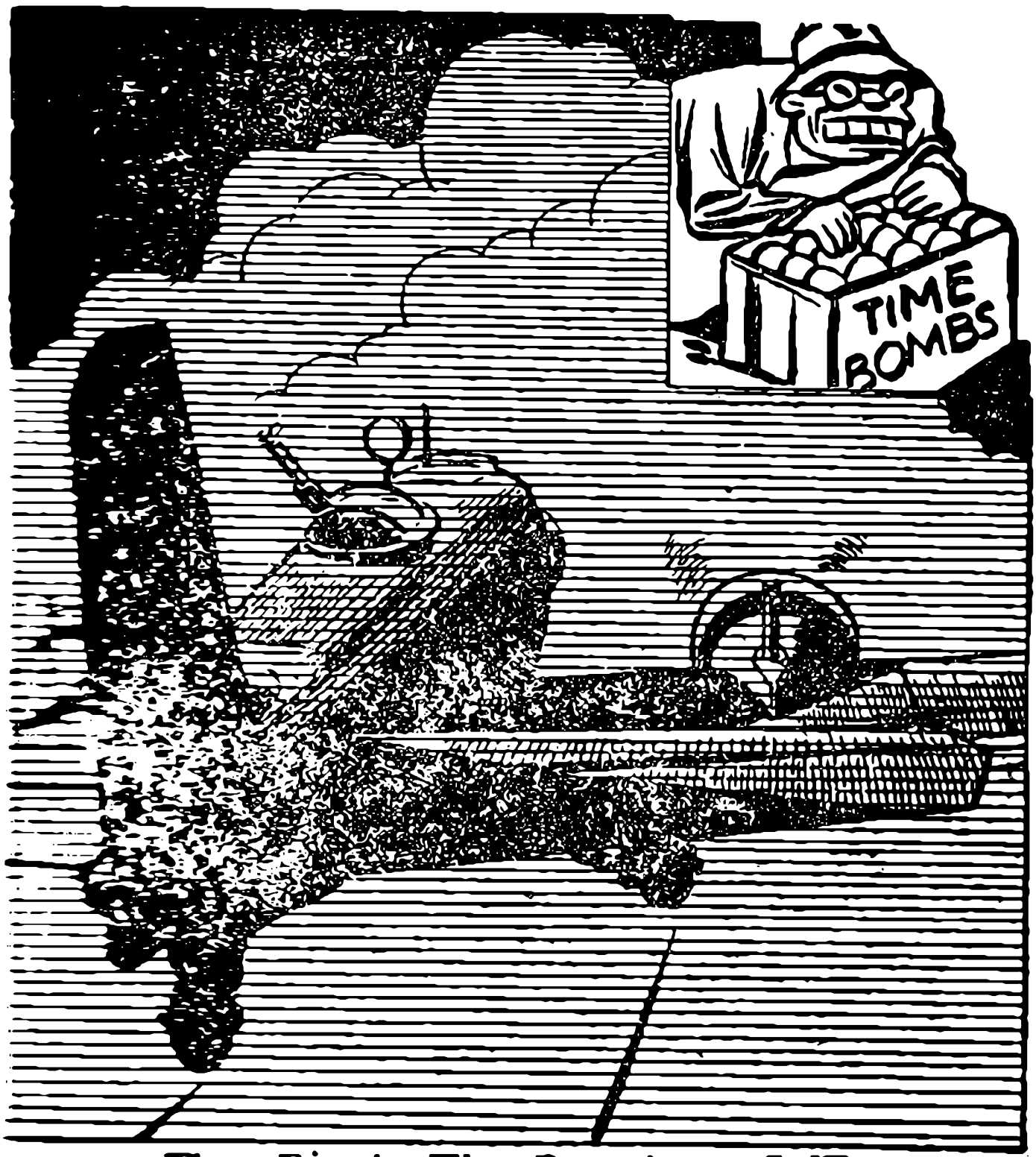
What Captain Midnight did not mention was another fact: that China and Uncle Sam had dangerous enemies, Germany and Japan, and that those who aided China in her fight must be on guard at all times.



China Had Many Dangerous Enemies

Even as the amphibian plane flew above the clouds, those enemies were preparing to strike. Another plane, above and ahead of the American ship, was stalking like a hooded bird of prey.

In the sound-proof interior of the plane a man was seated in a low, wide chair. He was a small man, but a being taut with nervous energy. Only his eyes, huge round orbs with flickering green lights playing in their depths, gave evi-



These Enemies Were Preparing to Strike

dence of his tremendous power and satanic cunning.

The man was perfectly quiet as he watched a dark screen in the center of a huge instrument panel before him.

Another man, stocky, muscular, with an Oriental cast of face, sat near by, also watching with deep concentration.

The small man, of indefinite nationality, was known as The Barracuda. It was rumored that this

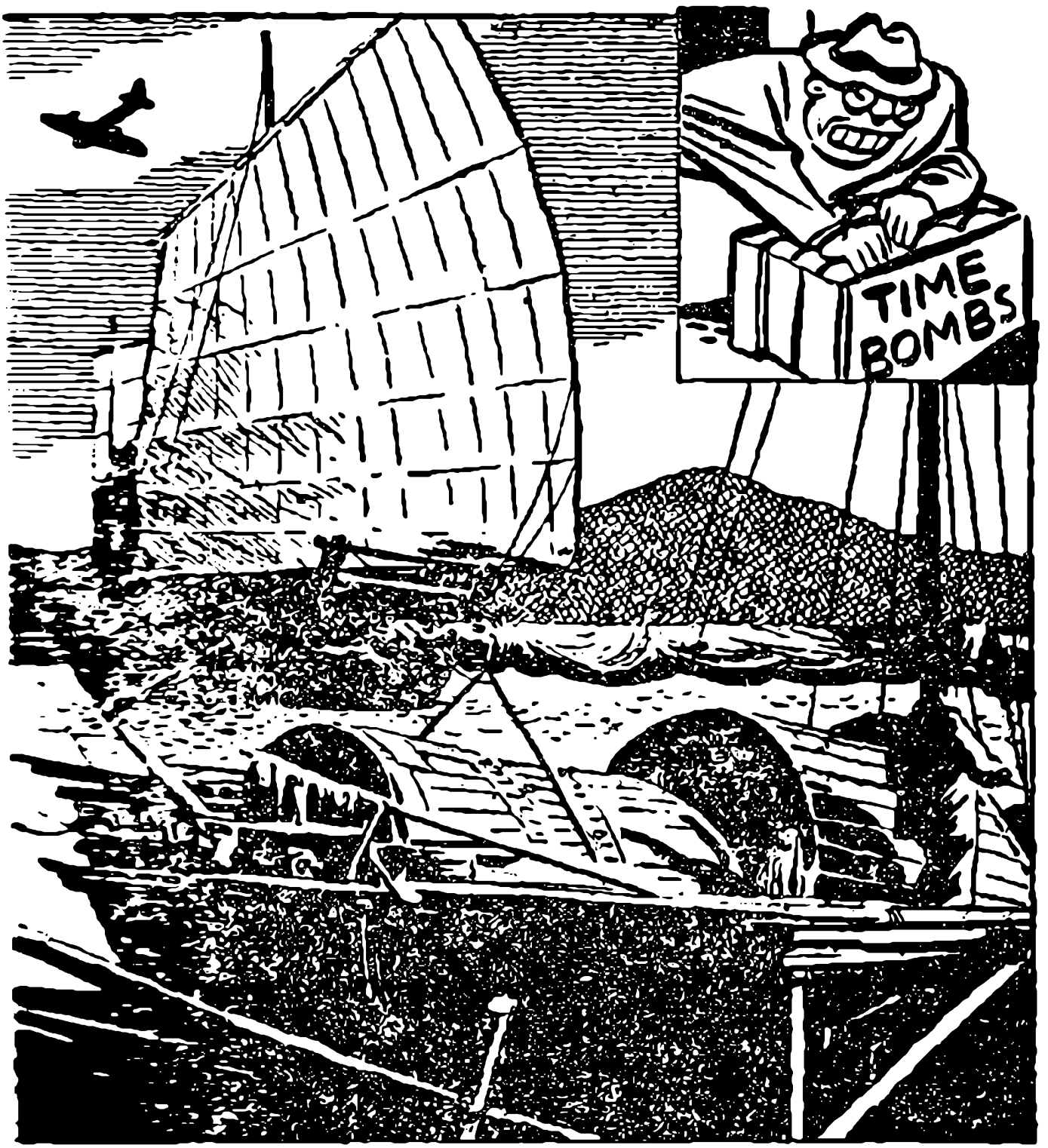
There Were Two Men in the Plane

man, familiarly known as Cuda, had wormed his way into the confidence of the government of China and then betrayed China to its enemy.

The Japanese with him was the fiendish Colonel Goto. It was he who finally spoke.

"X-30 reported that the American plane left Hongkong at seven-thirty. It is unfortunate—"

"Those who failed to stop it will be punished, Goto," said Cuda



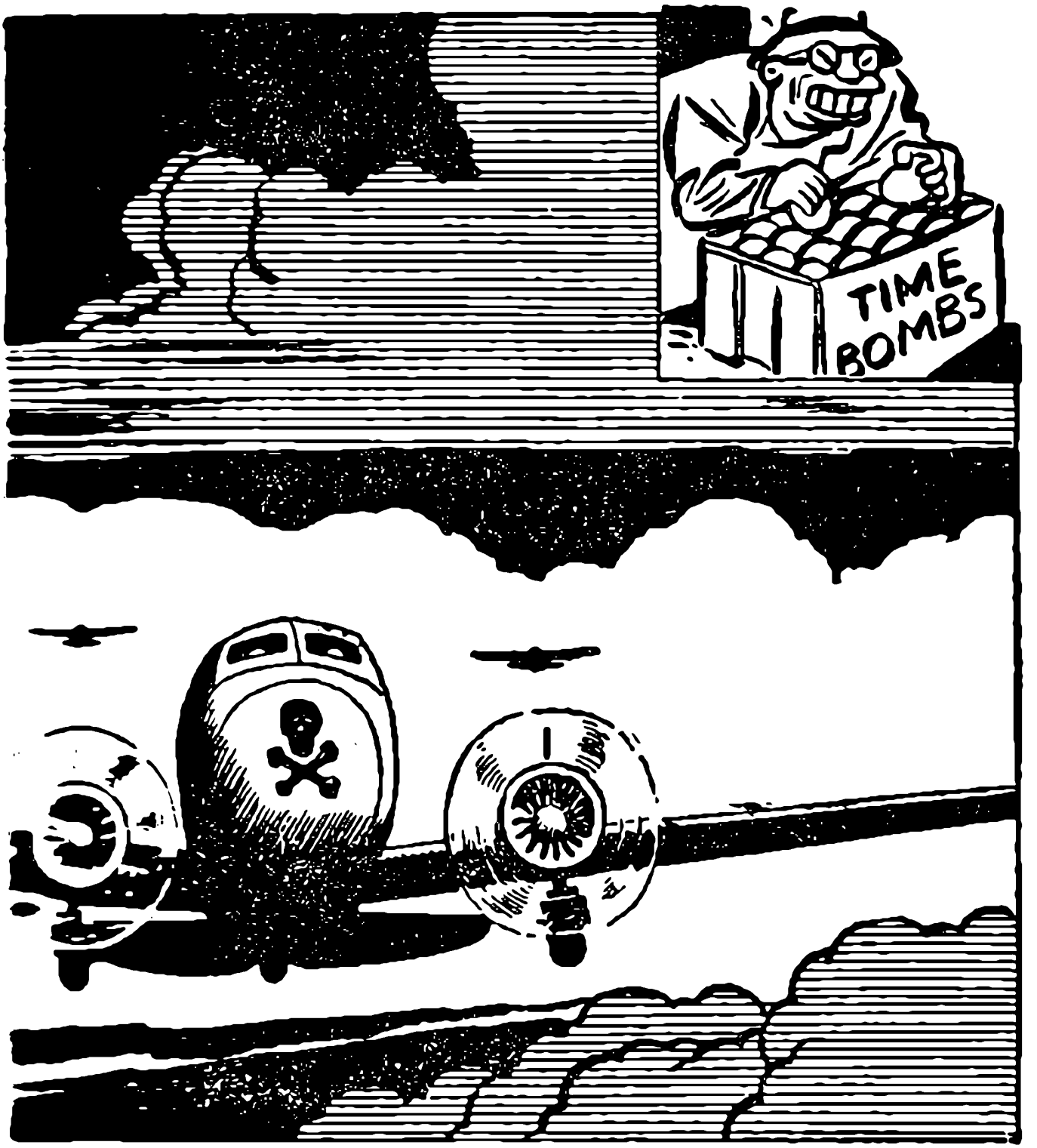
"The American Plane Left Hongkong."

"Look in the screen! There is Captain Midnight's plane."

Cuda leaned forward and switched on a radio transmitter. He spoke curtly into the microphone.

"All right, X-30 and X-40. The plane we are seeking is below, flying at about 7,000 feet. You will attack!"

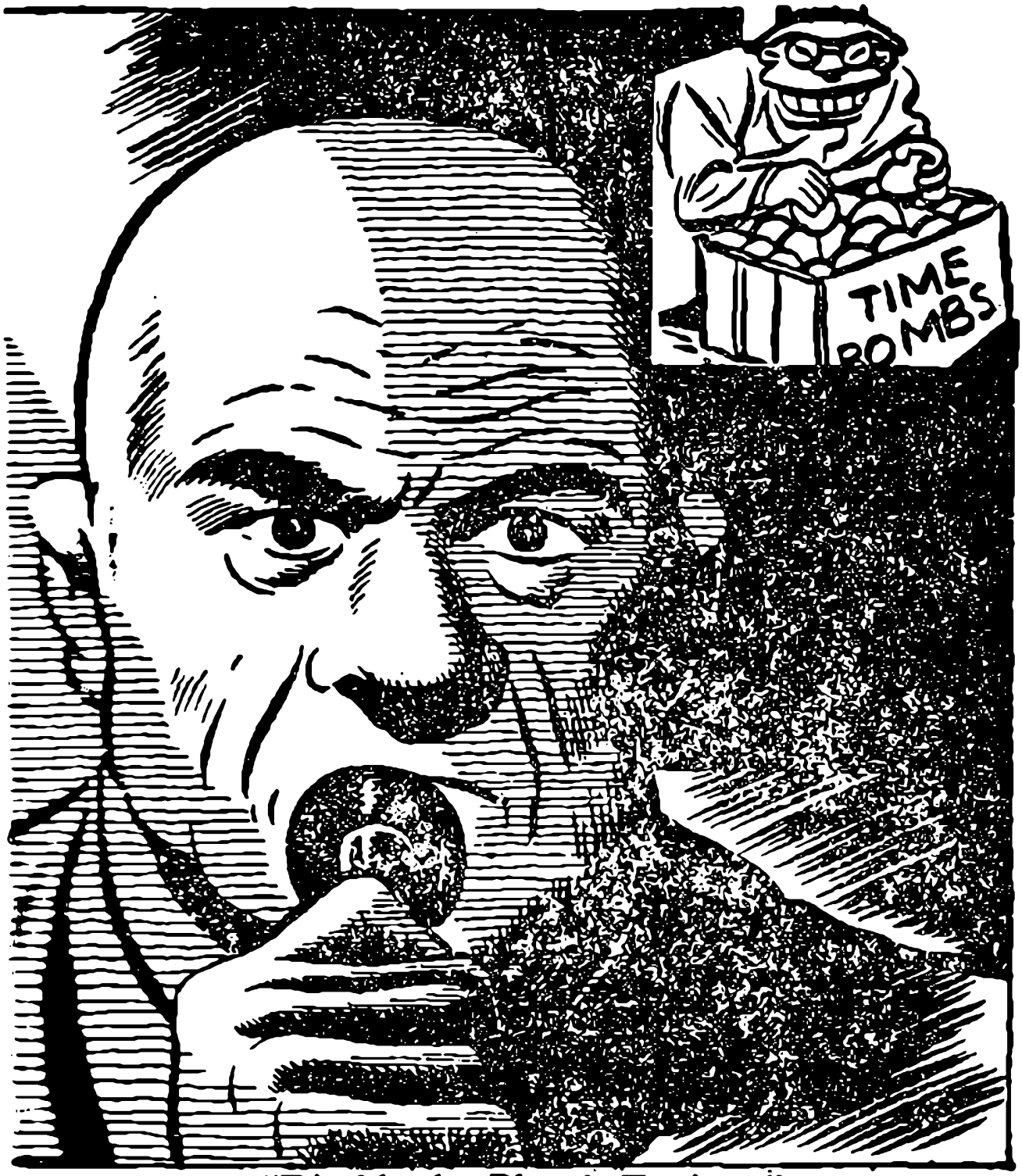
Answering signals came from two ships tailing the Barracuda's craft.



Two Planes Tailed Cuda's Plane

"Disable the American plane's engines and riddle the cabin and cockpit with bullets. That is all," the Cuda ordered. He replaced the microphone and turned to Colonel Goto. "Perhaps we shall see something amusing if we watch," the Cuda said, waving his hand toward the image of the American plane that appeared on the screen in front of him.

Those in the amphibian were unaware of the shadowing plane until

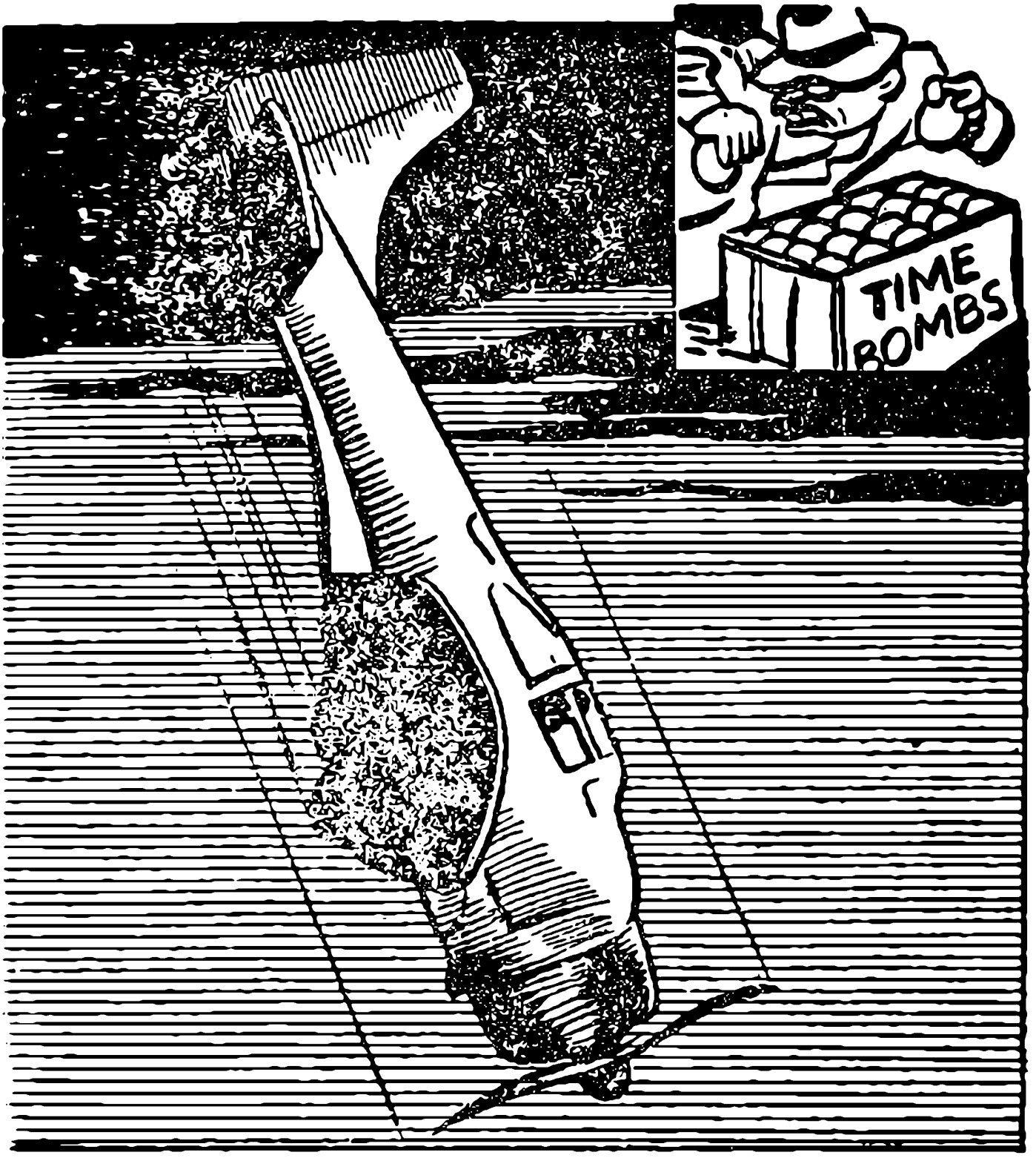


"Disable the Plane's Engines."

Joyce called attention to a flickering streak in the sky above and to the left. Even as she cried out, a second wavering streak appeared in the sky.

"It's flame from an airplane's exhaust," she cried. "It's diving at us."

Chuck turned and as he did he caught sight of another ship diving from the other direction. The third craft, the one Joyce had spotted first, flew on, without chang-



"It's Diving at Us!"

ing its course. It was this ship that carried Cuda and Goto, although the Americans as yet did not know these two fiends. They were to meet later.

"Take the co-pilot's seat, Joyce," Captain Midnight ordered. "Strap yourself in. Chuck, you and Mudd man the guns in the rear. The communication system is open."

As the captain spoke he put the plane into a sharp dive. Chuck, hanging on grimly, climbed back to

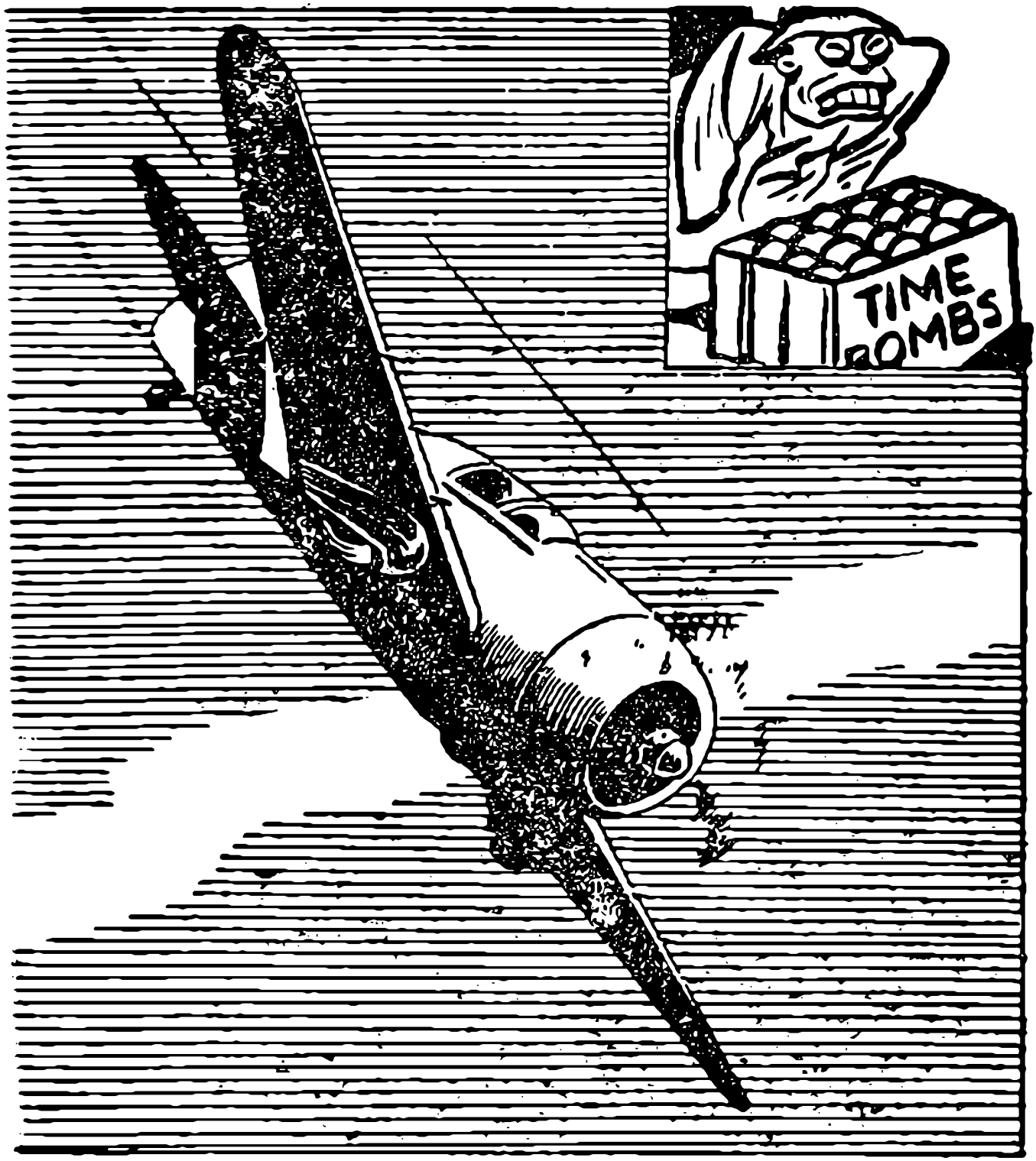
"Take the Co-Pilot's Seat, Joyce."

the rear.

He caught a glimpse of one of the enemy planes, with flashes coming from the leading edge of the wing. The plane was hostile and it was firing rapidly at the American ship.

A crash sounded in the control cabin and Joyce was showered with glass as a spray of bullets passed over the machine.

Then, suddenly, the engines spluttered. First one and then the



The Plane Fired at the American Ship

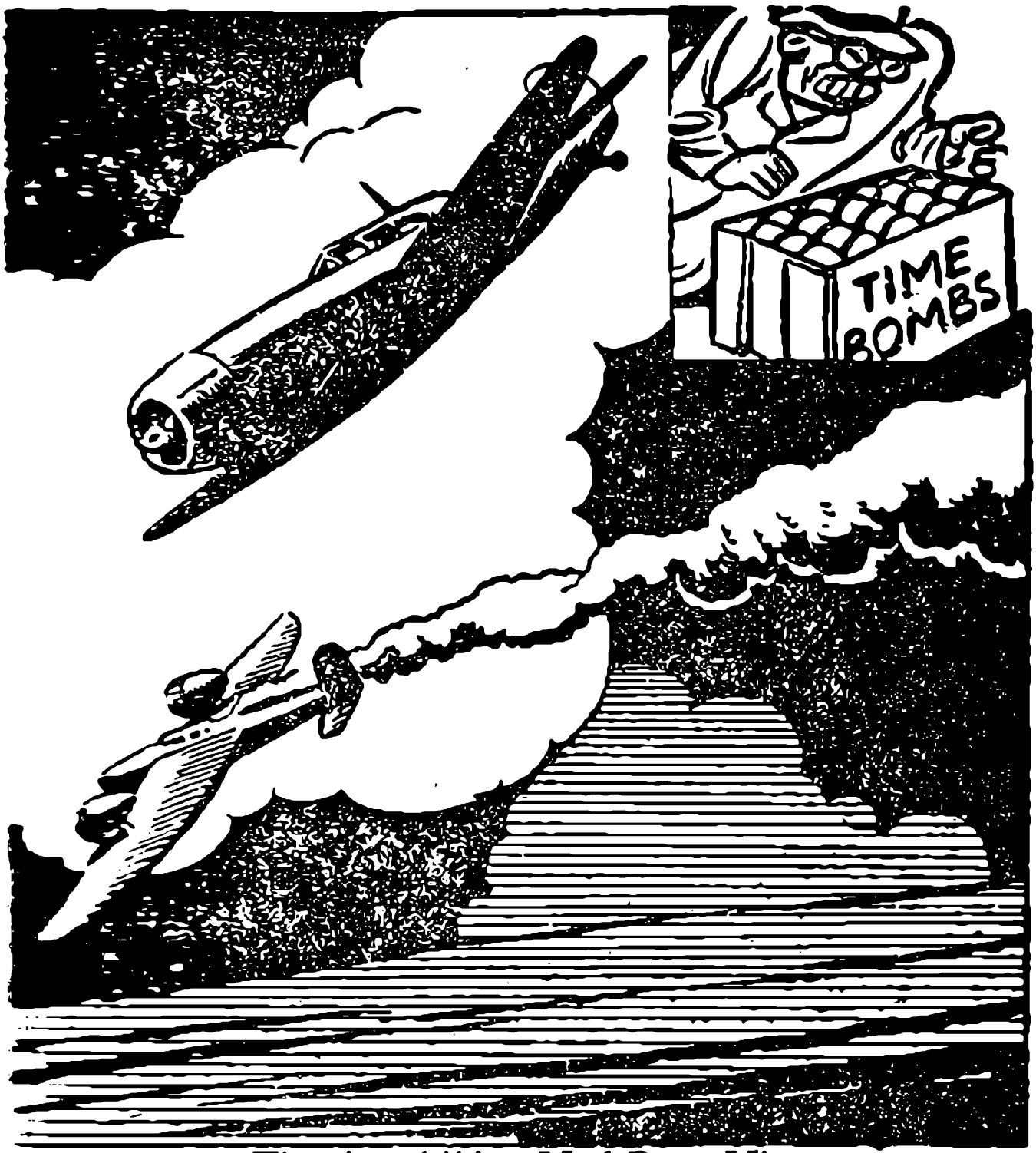
other lost speed. The amphibian had been hit.

Then a greater danger stared the Americans in the face. A long, reddish tongue of flame crept upward from the left engine.

Captain Midnight spoke into the communication phone:

"Hold them off, Chuck, until we get into the clouds below. Then get ready to bail out."

The ship zoomed downward toward the clouds. In the rear of the

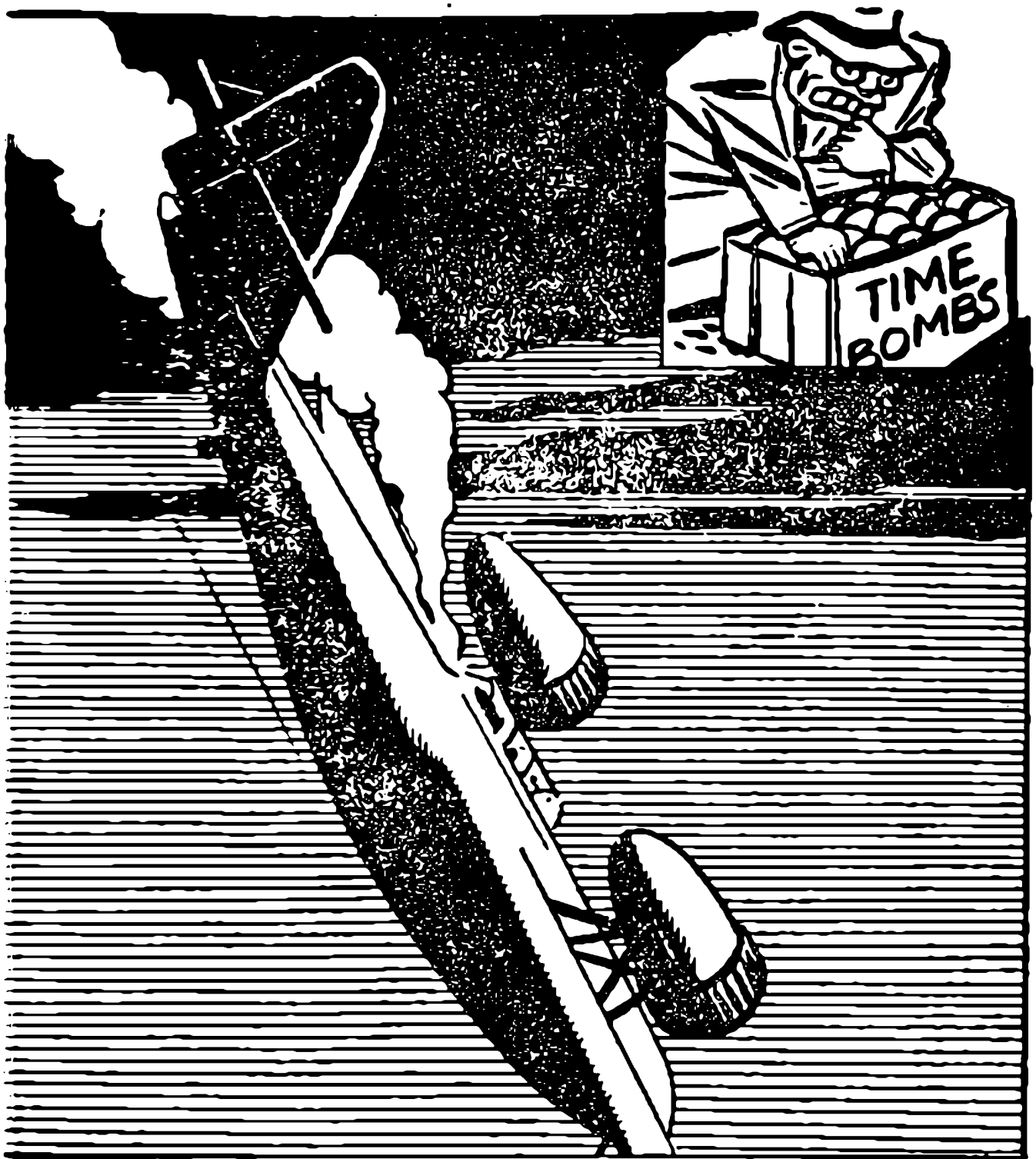


The Amphibian Had Been Hit

plane the machine guns clattered back at the two diving pursuit ships.

The reddish flames crept higher and ate into the wing of the plane. The ship had only a few minutes of life left now, but the nose already was digging into wisps of cloud.

A plane dived close to the amphibian and raked the craft with machine-gun bullets. Glass crashed from the cabin windows and



The Ship Zoomed Downward

shattered the instrument panel in front of Captain Midnight, but miraculously all of the occupants of the ship escaped any serious injury.

Then, suddenly, the ship was wrapped in a cloud. Captain Midnight jerked the controls to bring the ship out of its dive long enough for the occupants to bail out.

Captain Midnight jerked open the trapdoor in the cabin.

"Joyce will go first; you'll jump

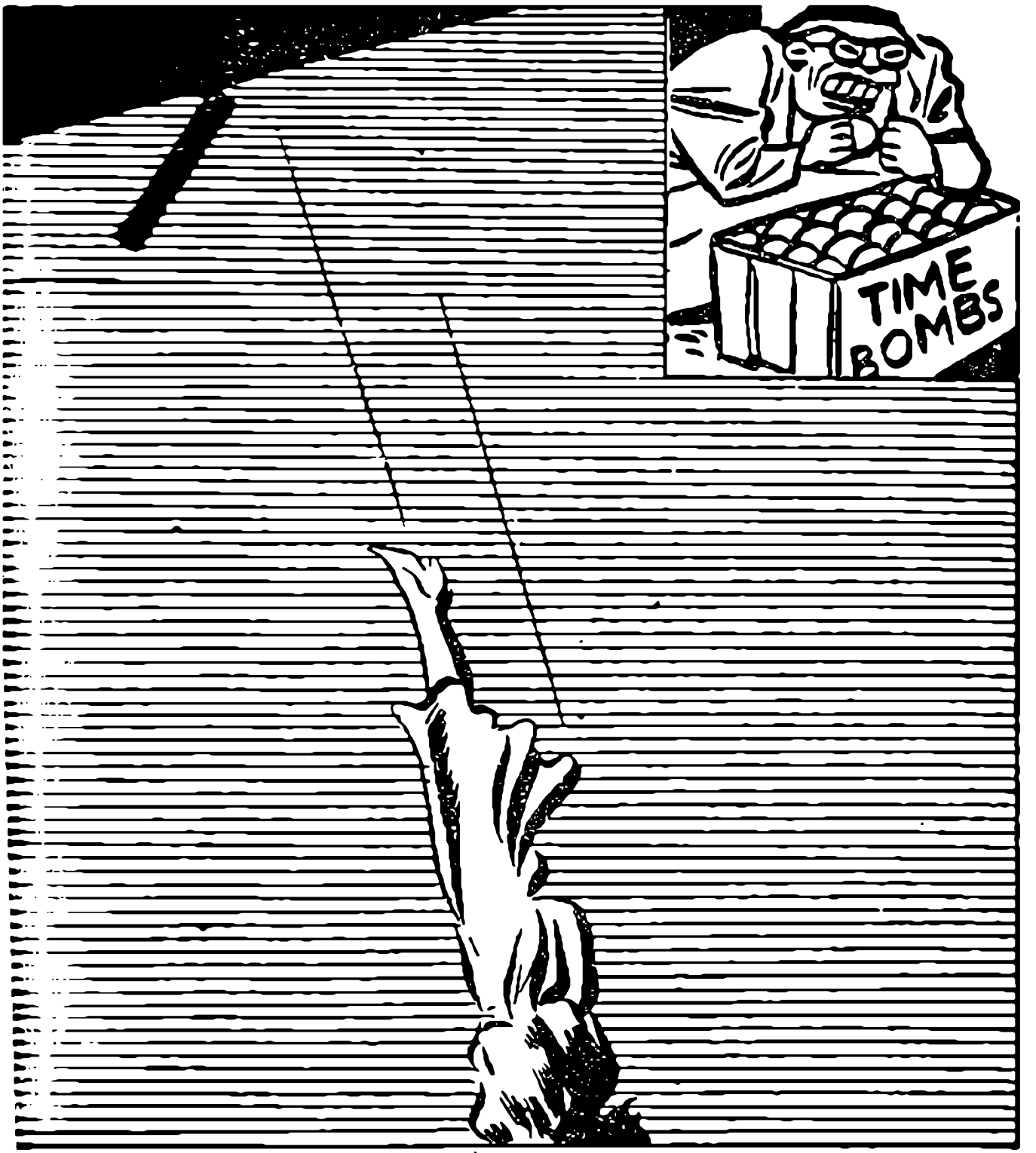
Captain Midnight Jerked the Controls

next, Chuck, then Ikky. We'll all make toward the blaze of the plane after it falls—"

"Yes, but everyone else will run that way too. There's no way telling what we might possibly bump into—"

"You're right, Chuck," the captain said. "We'll meet half a mile directly north of the place where the plane hits. All right, Joyce, out you go!"

Joyce gamely sucked in her



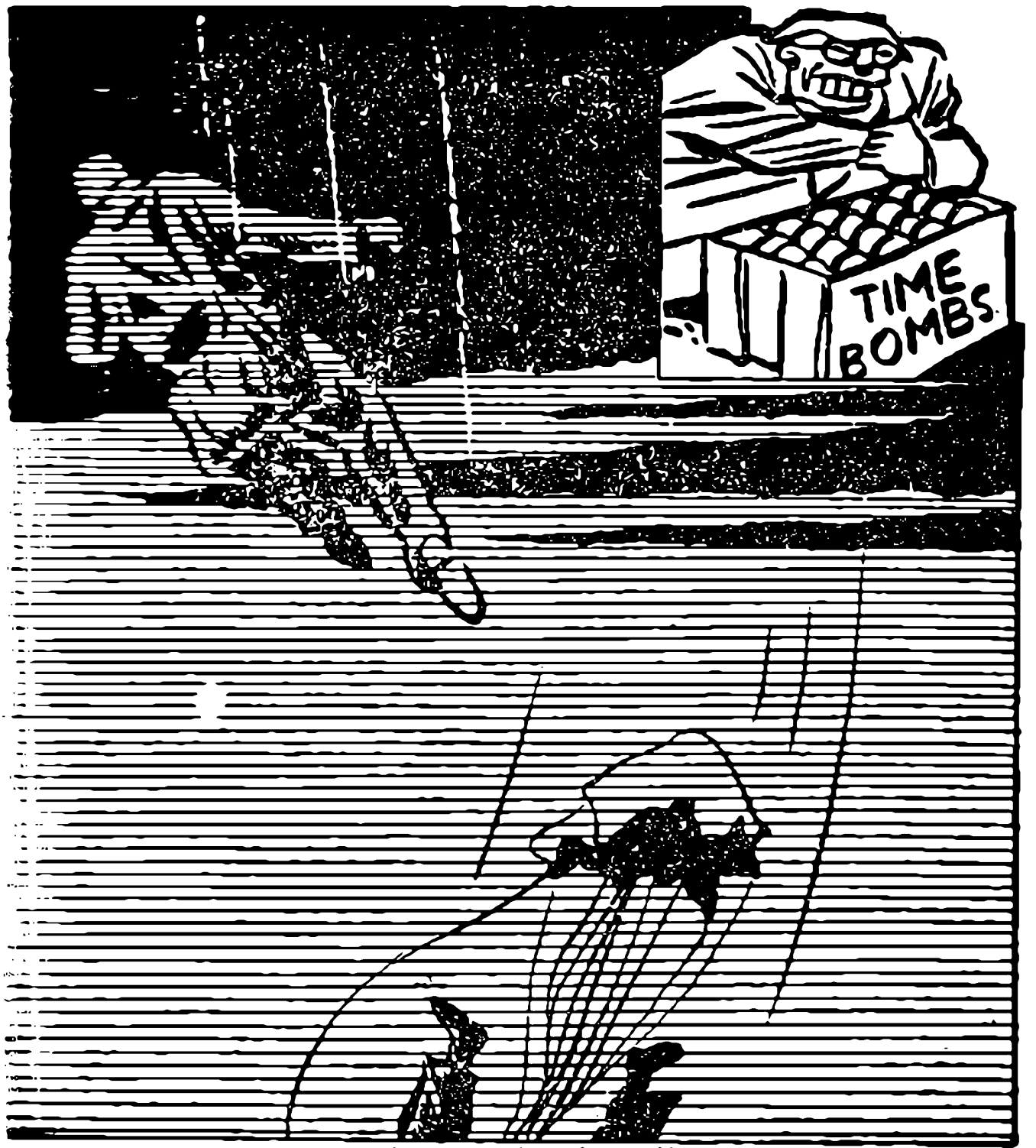
Joyce Dived Through the Air

breath and dived through the hole in the cabin floor.

"All right, Chuck!" Captain Midnight called.

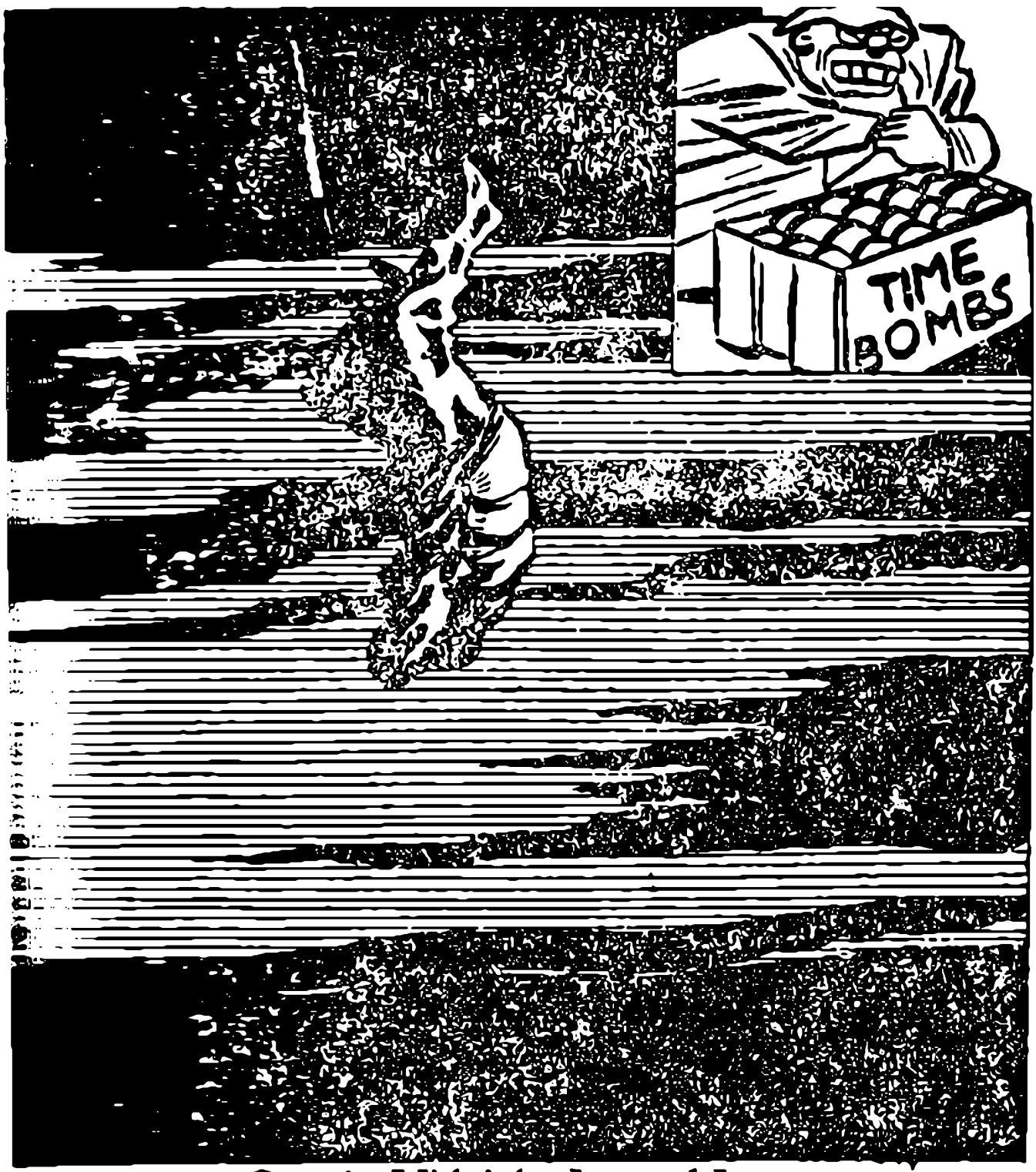
"See you on the ground," Chuck said, grasping the ring on his parachute ripcord and jumping through the dark hole cabin of the ship.

Ichabod Mudd nodded and jumped through the hole. He passed directly through the flames on his way down. A moment later Cap-



Ichabod and Chuck Followed

tain Midnight plunged through the flames and drifted downward beneath a great billowing white parachute.



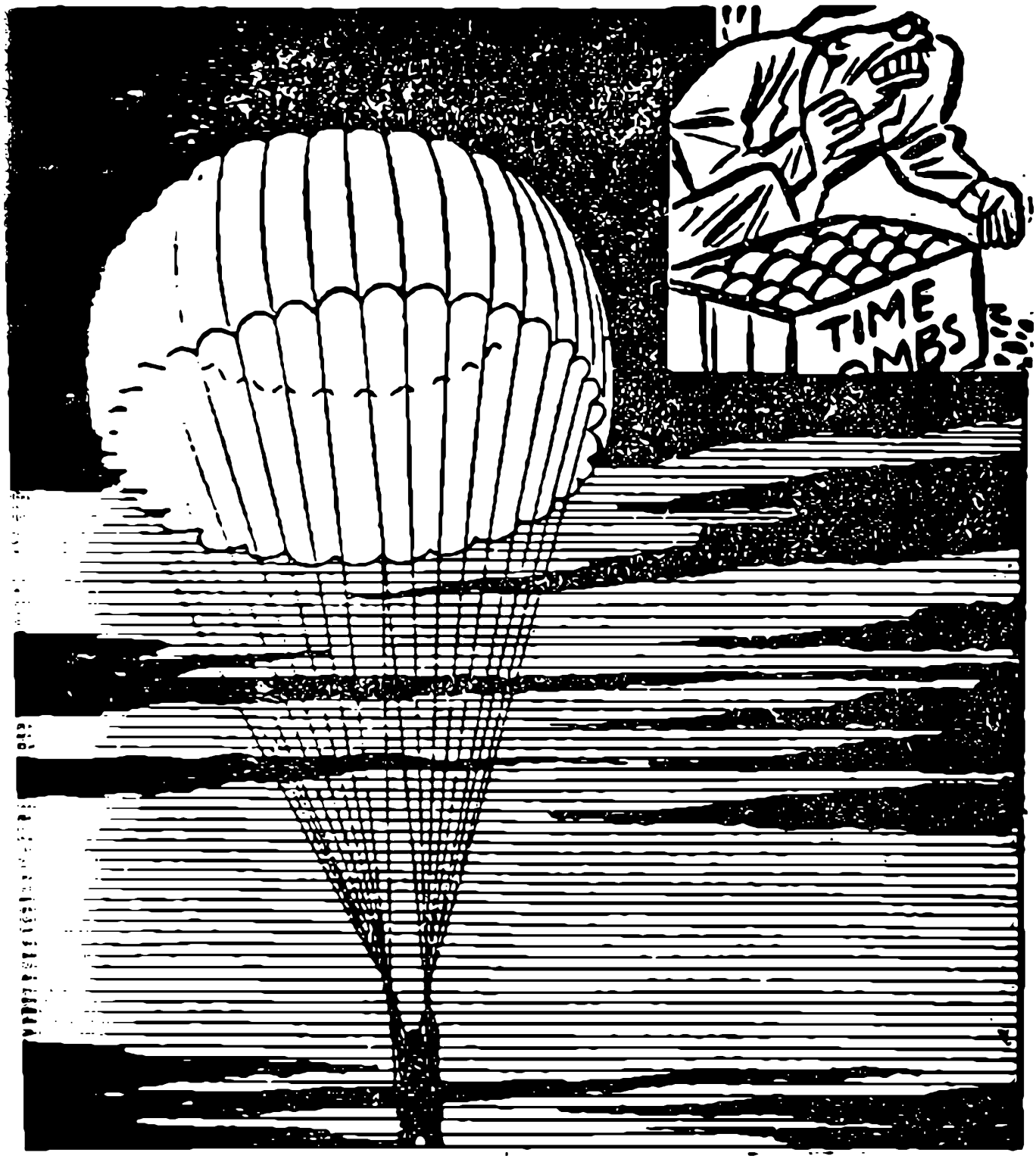
Captain Midnight Jumped Last

CHAPTER II

DOWN TO EARTH

Chuck and Joyce plummeted down through the night sky. Hundreds of feet below the disintegrating plane their parachutes bloomed like gigantic white flowers in a dark field.

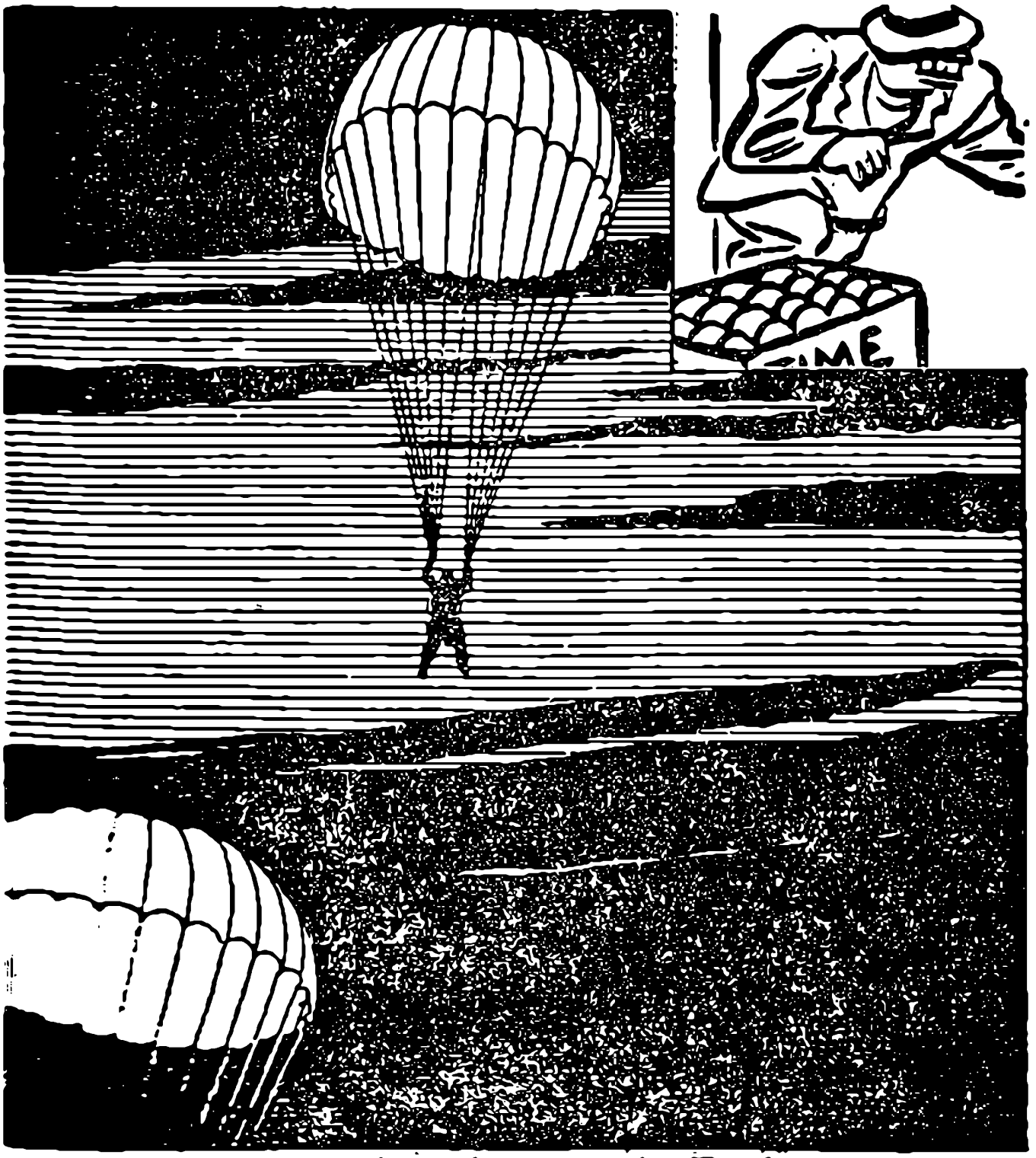
Above them, somewhere, were Captain Midnight and Ichabod Mudd. Joyce was below Chuck, b



They Plummeted Through the Sky

the young aviator could see her parachute clearly. Chuck pulled the shroud lines and slipped his 'chute so that he was able to move nearer to her. Softly and silently the two young Secret Squadron agents slid through the night air. At last the earth was in view.

Joyce landed and her 'chute began dragging her before she grasped the lines and spilled the air. Chuck was down on the ground beside her in another moment and



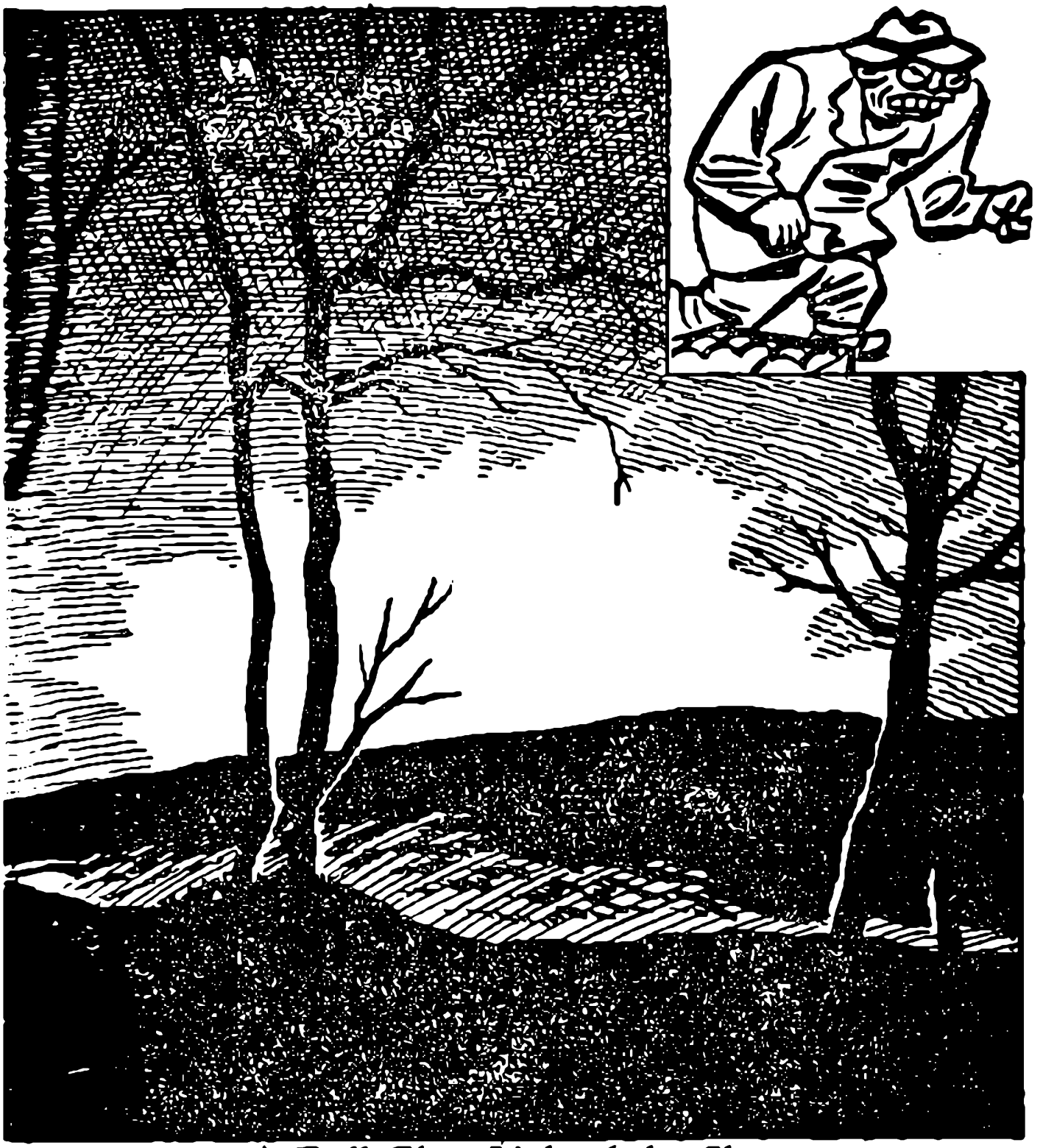
They Slipped Nearer the Earth

he quickly slid out of his harness and joined the girl.

"Now to find Captain Midnight and Ikky," Joyce said. "Where's the burning plane? It can't be very far away. There! Over to our right!"

A dull glow could be seen above a rise in the ground. It was a fire, undoubtedly that of the burning plane.

Leaving their 'chutes on the ground, they started off on foot to-



A Dull Glow Lighted the Sky

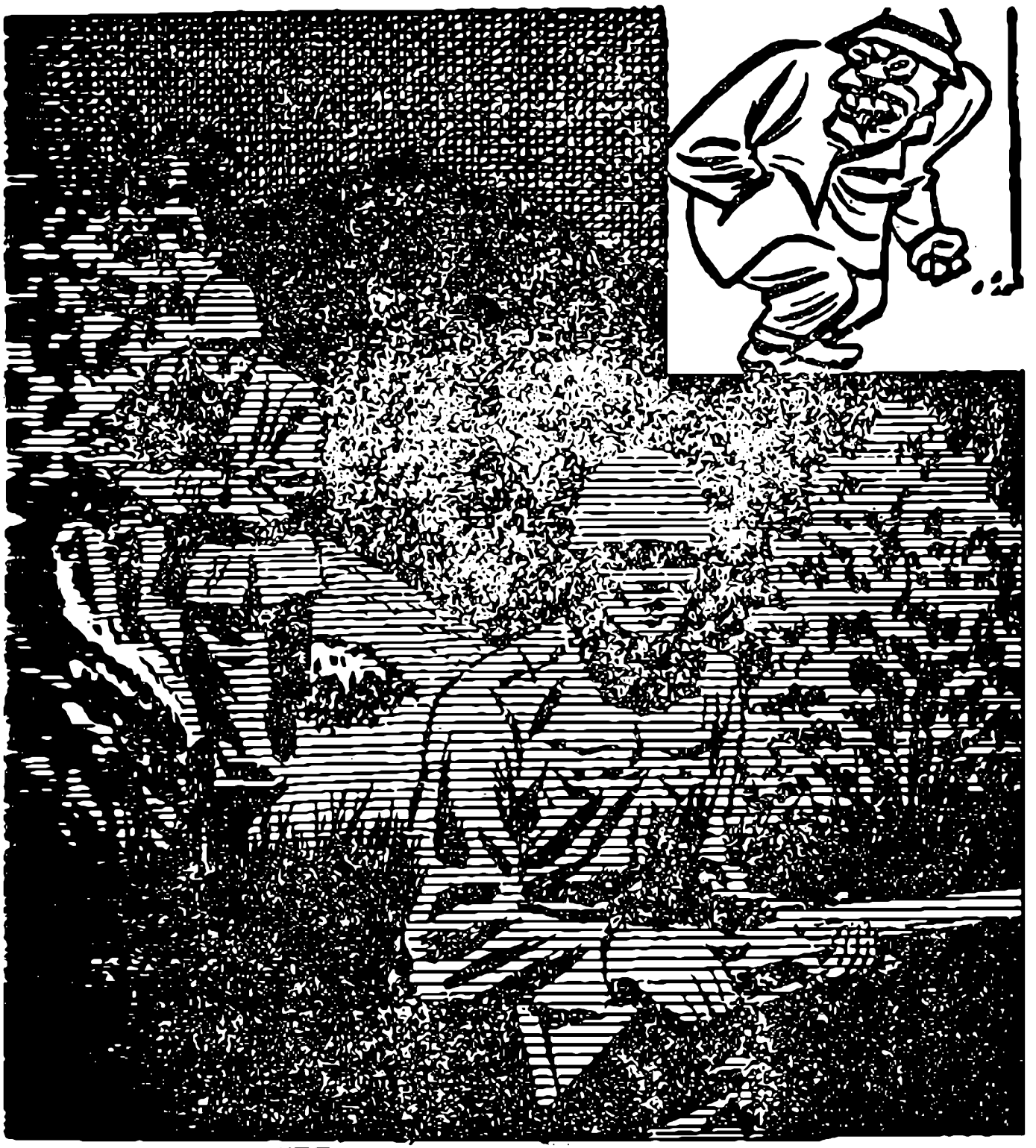
ward the fire. Suddenly Chuck seized Joyce by the arm and froze motionless.

"What's the matter, Chuck?" Joyce asked.

"Look to our left," Chuck whispered. "I thought those were stumps of trees, but they're not—they're men!"

"I see them!" Joyce whispered in reply. "They're carrying something—"

"Guns! Those men are soldiers!"

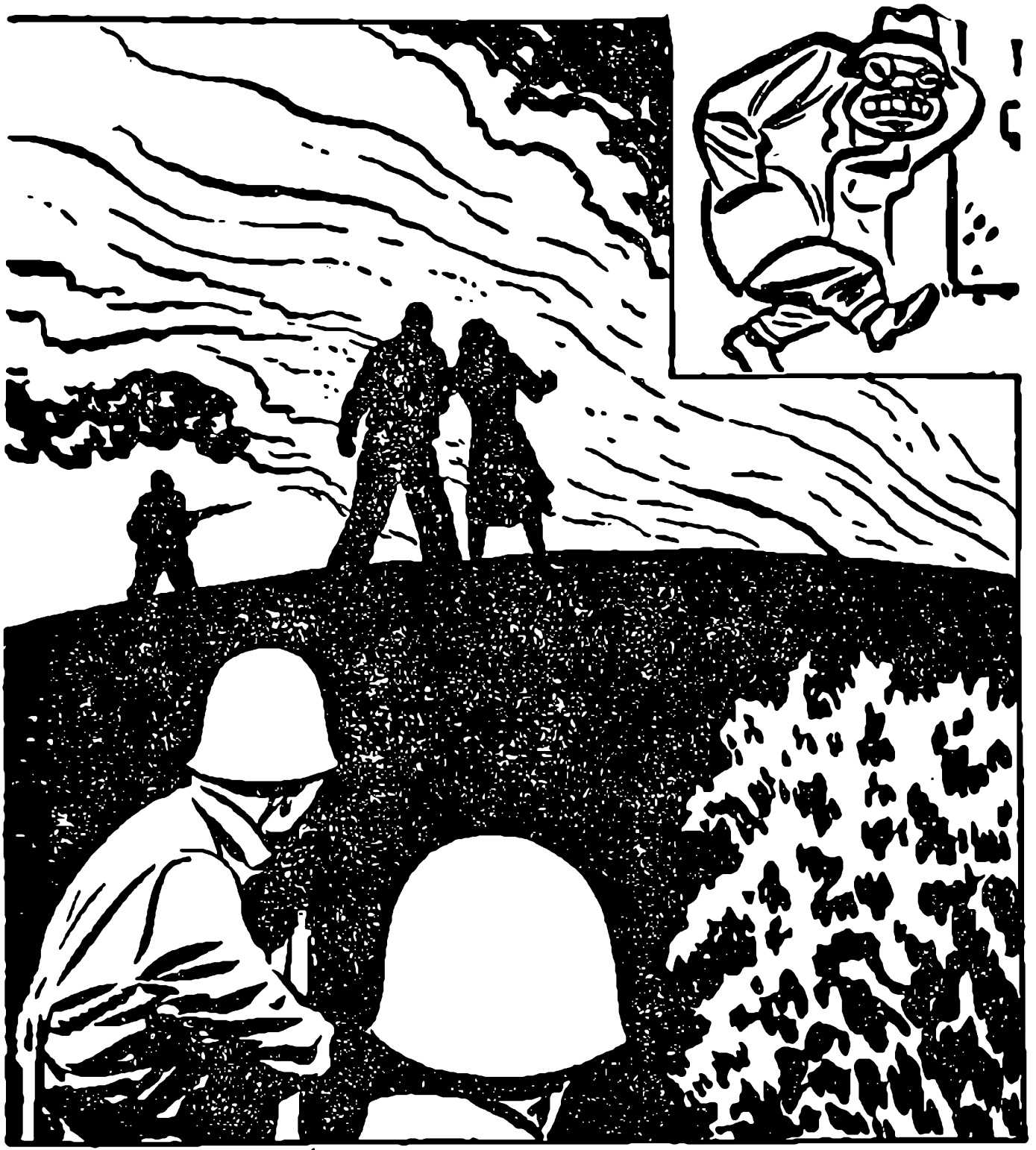


"Those Men Are Soldiers!"

Chuck whispered. He jerked the girl by the arm and they crouched down, close to the ground.

But the discovery was made too late. The men apparently had seen the pair, for they stopped, and moved toward the place where Chuck and Joyce were hiding.

A jabbering of voices came from the other direction now, and Chuck turned his head. His heart sank in despair. There were men behind too.



"We're Surrounded!"

"We're surrounded!" he told Joyce.

At the same moment, barely a mile away, Captain Midnight and Ichabod Mudd were crouching in a shallow ravine, while about four hundred yards away a blazing fire was consuming all that was left of the Secret Squadron amphibian.

"There's one plane that ain't gonna fly no more," Mudd said despondently.

"And she carried us many a mile

They Crouched in a Ravine

too, Ikky," Captain Midnight added. "But forget the plane. I'm worried about Chuck and Joyce."

The two moved along the ravine, taking care to keep under cover so they would not be spotted in the light from the flames. But there were no others at the scene. This seemed strange at first, until Captain Midnight surmised that the plane had fallen in a region controlled by Japan.

"People stay locked in their

They Kept Under Cover

houses at night no matter what happens," Captain Midnight explained. "They probably think some poor farmer's home has been set afire."

The two trudged on.

"I wonder who's got it in fer us," Mudd asked. "What's the idea of a bunch of planes pouncin' on us in the night like that? And how did they know where to find us?"

"I wish I could answer those questions, Ikky, but I can't," Cap-

The Two Trudged On

tain Midnight replied. "This much is certain, though: somebody does not want us over here and he's going to kill us if necessary to keep us out. We're in a bad spot! We're in a hostile country and we've lost our plane. And our party's separated—"

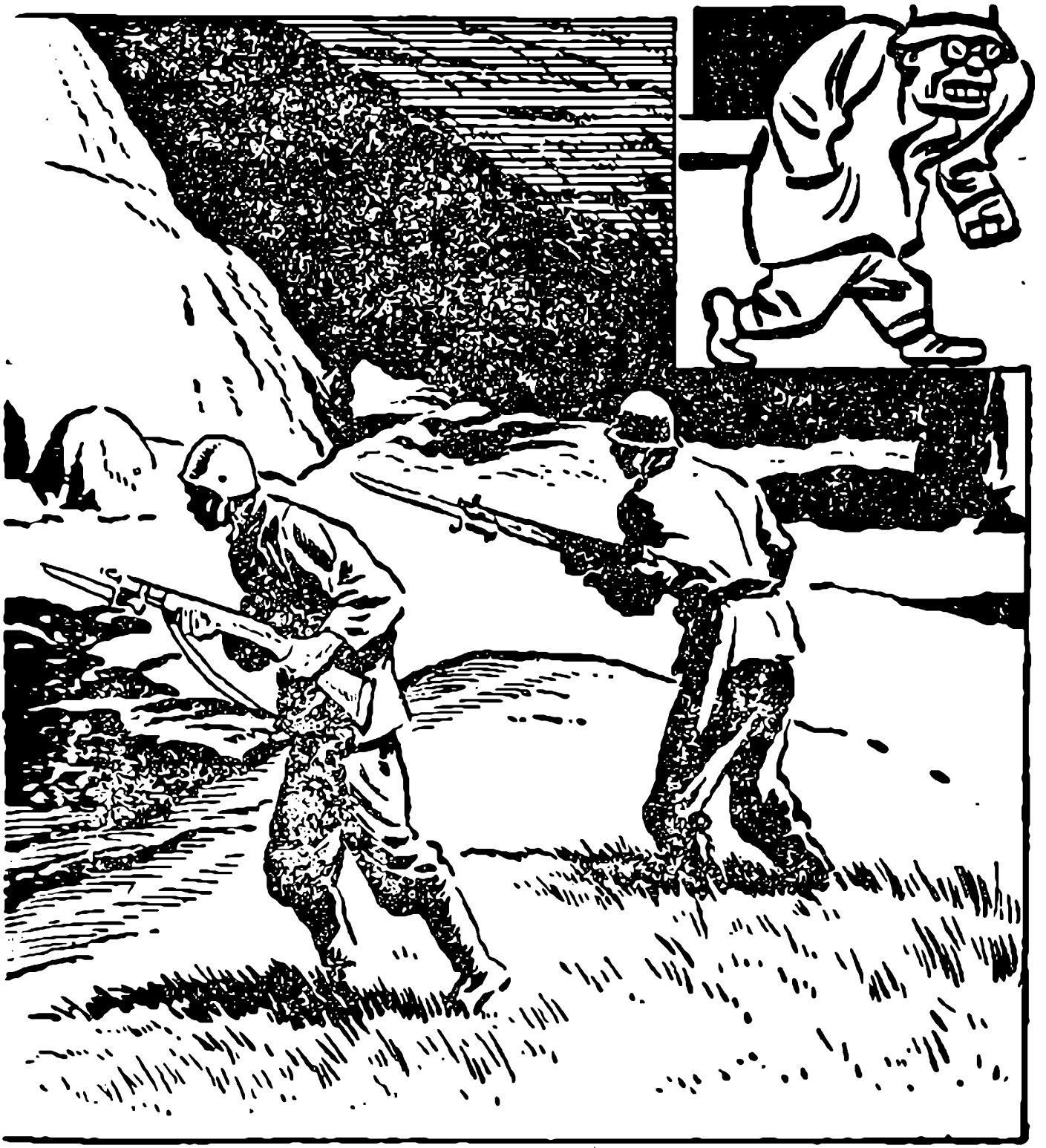
Captain Midnight stopped and stood dead still in his tracks. Behind them they heard footsteps. As the American flier turned he saw soldiers clearly revealed in the

They Heard Footsteps

glare from the burning plane. The soldiers were looking in every hole and behind every bush and rock.

Quickly Captain Midnight dragged Ichabod Mudd into a hole in the wall of the ravine. Escape seemed impossible. If the Americans tried to move in one direction, they would be revealed by the fire. In the other direction the soldiers cut off all avenues of escape.

The soldiers moved slowly up the ravine.



Soldiers Moved Along the Ravine

"The only chance we got is for all o' them guys to break their necks, and I guess that's too much to hope," Mudd decided.

The soldiers came closer and the sounds of their voices came clearly to the ears of the Americans. Then, just as discovery seemed inevitable, the soldiers moved back, away from the hiding place of Captain Midnight and Ichabod Mudd.

"Look, Cap'n! Look over on that high piece of ground!" Mudd said,

"Look, Cap'n!"

pointing.

The glare of the fire revealed a crowd of soldiers and in the middle of the group were a young man and a young girl, dressed in flying togs.

"Chuck and Joyce!" Captain Midnight exclaimed. "They've got Chuck and Joyce."

"We've got to get away from here and get away fast," Mudd said. "It's our only chance to rescue 'em. But how're we gonna do

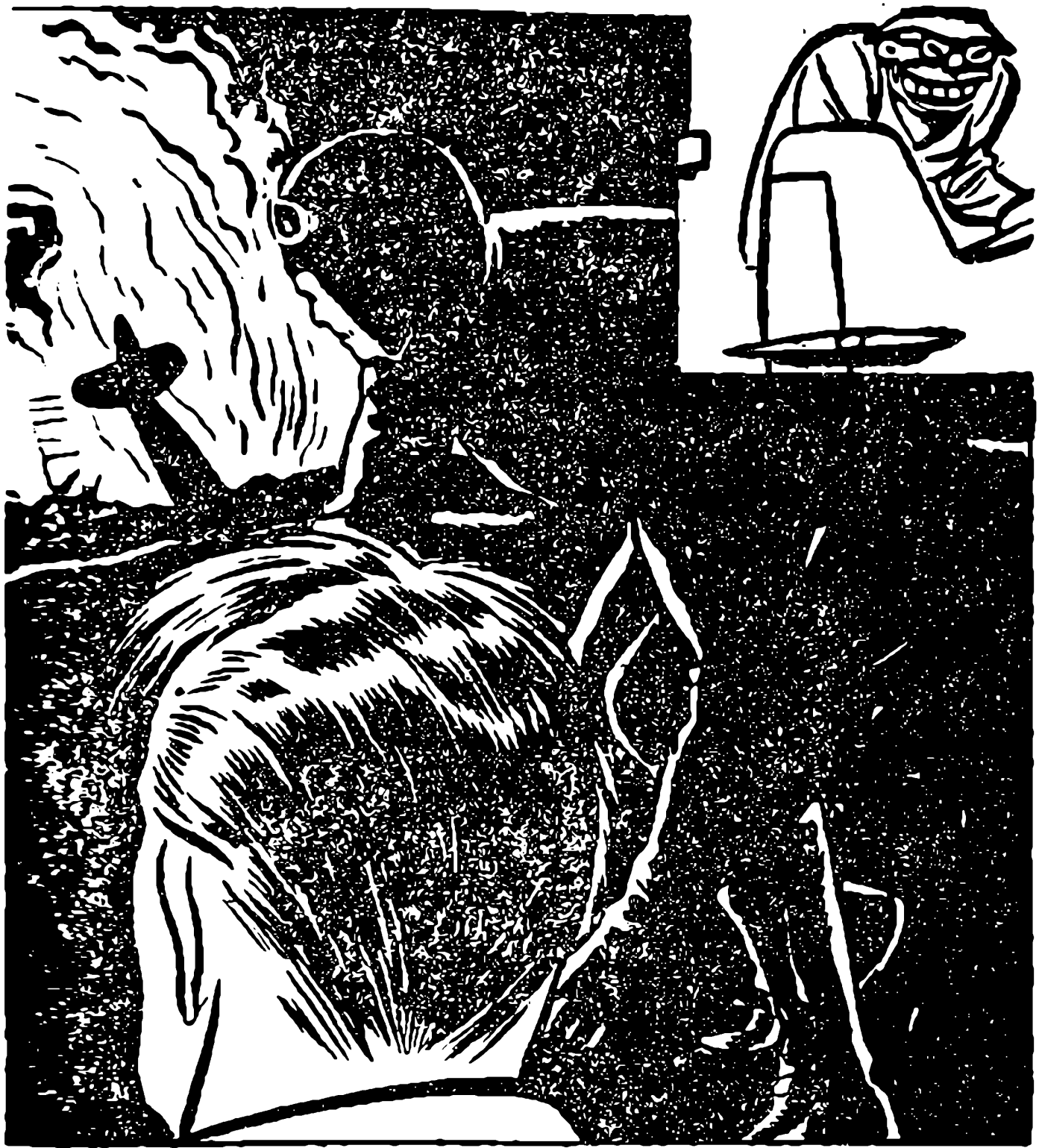
"They've Got Chuck and Joyce!"

it?"

"Look, Ikky, this is our chance to get away!" the captain said. "Chuck and Joyce have diverted the attention of the soldiers a few minutes. They may think Chuck and Joyce were the only ones on the plane. Now they're the center of attraction."

"But we've gotta run toward the plane, where the light's the brightest!"

"No, we can slip along that low



"This Is Our Chance!"

place to the left of the plane—we've got a chance. Come on!"

The two men started forward, running in a crouching position into the light. The crackling of the flames grew louder and they could feel the heat. A warning hiss caused the captain to throw himself on the ground, dragging Mudd after him. A second later one of the gasoline tanks on the amphibian exploded.

For a few seconds they lay flat

The Men Started Forward

on the ground without moving, knowing that the soldiers would be looking at the plane. But the explosion scattered much of the wreckage so the light now was not as bright as it had been. Within a few minutes it was safe to move.

A short time later the two men were out of danger, resting in a clump of trees a mile or two from the scene of the airplane crash.

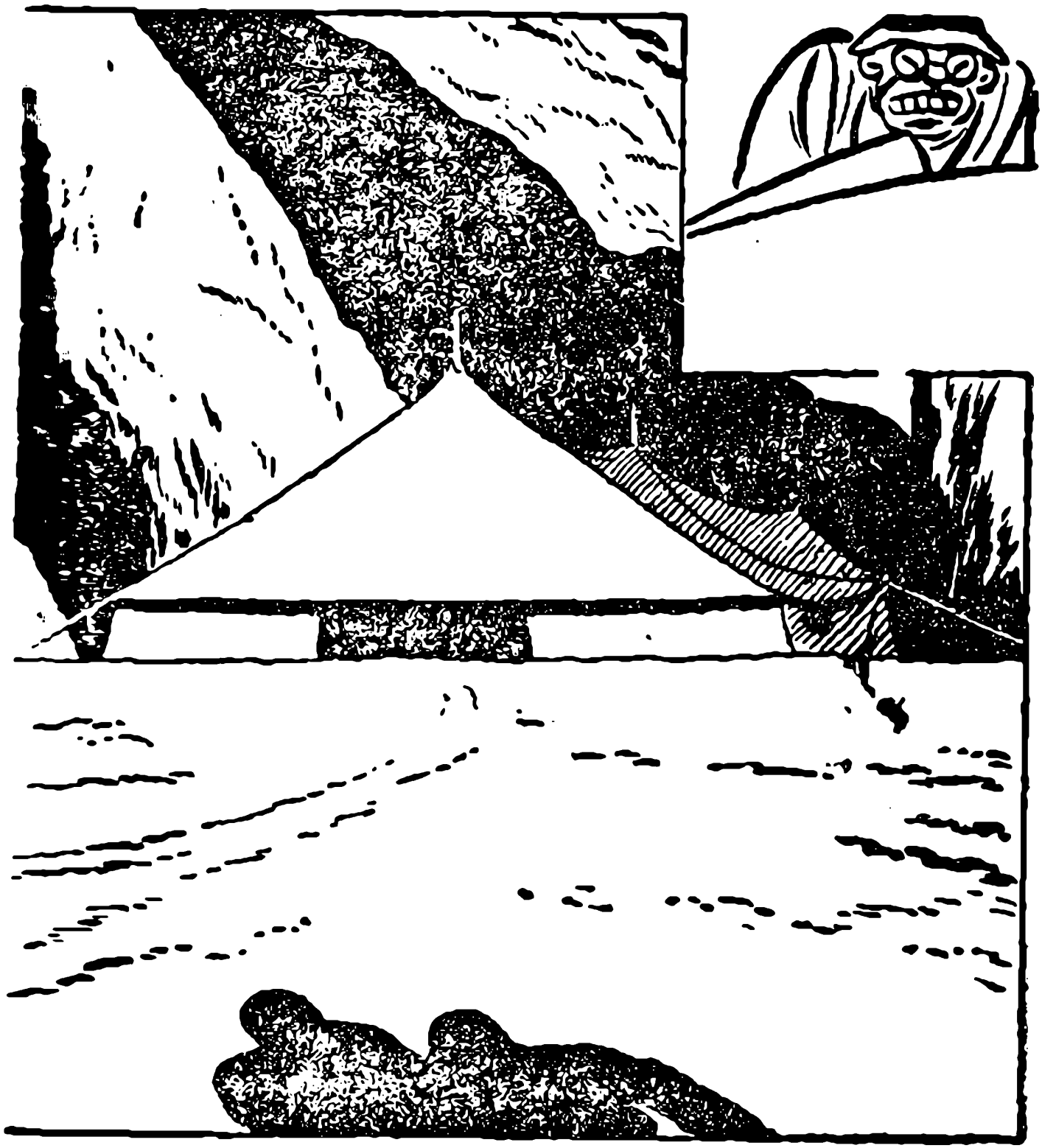
"Where're we goin' and what're we gonna do?" Mudd asked.

Soon It Was Safe to Move

"We've got to get across the lines and to Chungking," Captain Midnight decided. "I'd say Chungking is about three or four hundred miles."

"Sure gonna be a long walk!"

As the first streaks of dawn colored the eastern sky, Captain Midnight and Ichabod Mudd came to a flat, level field, miles from the scene of the crash. A ghostly structure loomed up out of the early morning in front of them and



"It's a Tent Hangar!"

Mudd gave a cry of delight:

"Jumpin' Jupiter! Can I believe my eyes! Why, it's a big tent airplane hangar!"

"Quiet!" Captain Midnight said. He nodded toward a sentry patrolling in front of the tent.

As the sentry moved away, the two Americans crawled forward. Instinctively Mudd knew what was going to happen. They were going to get a plane, or get hurt trying to get one.

"Quiet!" Captain Midnight Said!

As the Americans drew near the hangar some mechanics pushed a plane from the tent. They left the plane in front of the hangar and went back inside for another machine.

"This is our chance," Captain Midnight said. "Quickly!"

They started forward at a run. The sentry spied them as they were halfway to the plane and he shouted an alarm. An instant later the sentry's gun cracked and a bullet

The Sentry Spied Them

whizzed wildly past the running men.

A few seconds later they were in the cockpit and Mudd gave a groan. The markings on the control panel were all in undecipherable Japanese script!

"See if you can find a machine gun in the rear," Captain Midnight said. "This is a two-motored bomber and everything has been copied from an American model. I can operate this ship, all right."

"I Can Operate the Ship."

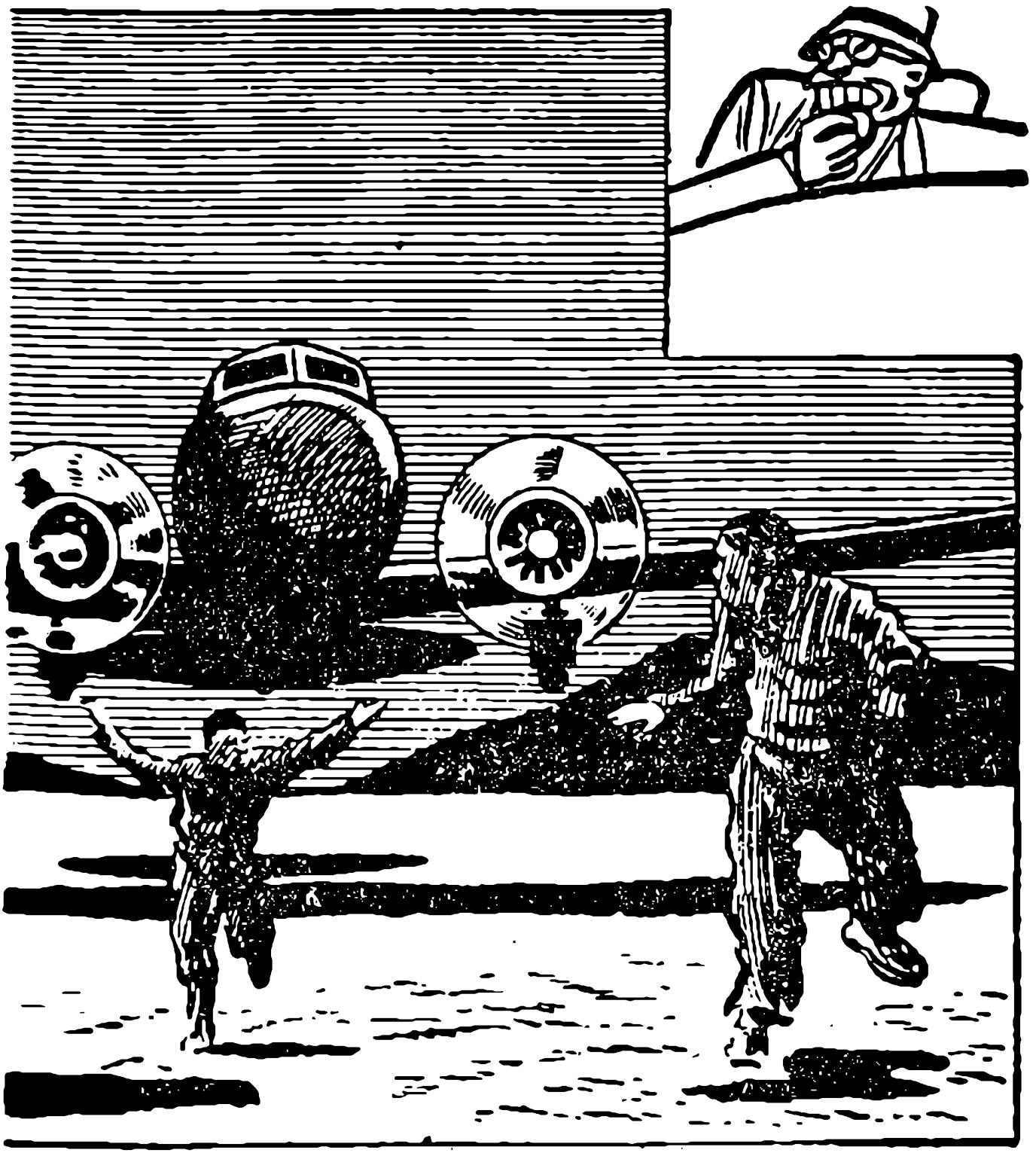
"Gosh! It gave me a start for a moment!"

Mudd moved to the rear of the ship as Captain Midnight started the motor. The mechanics in the hangar were pouring out trying to find out the cause of the commotion and cries of the sentry. Now as the plane's propeller began to turn, the mechanics ran forward.

Both engines of the two-motored ship caught at once. The plane roared.

'The Mechanics Rushed Forward

A burst from the machine gun scattered the mechanics and the ship taxied out across the field and rose into the air.



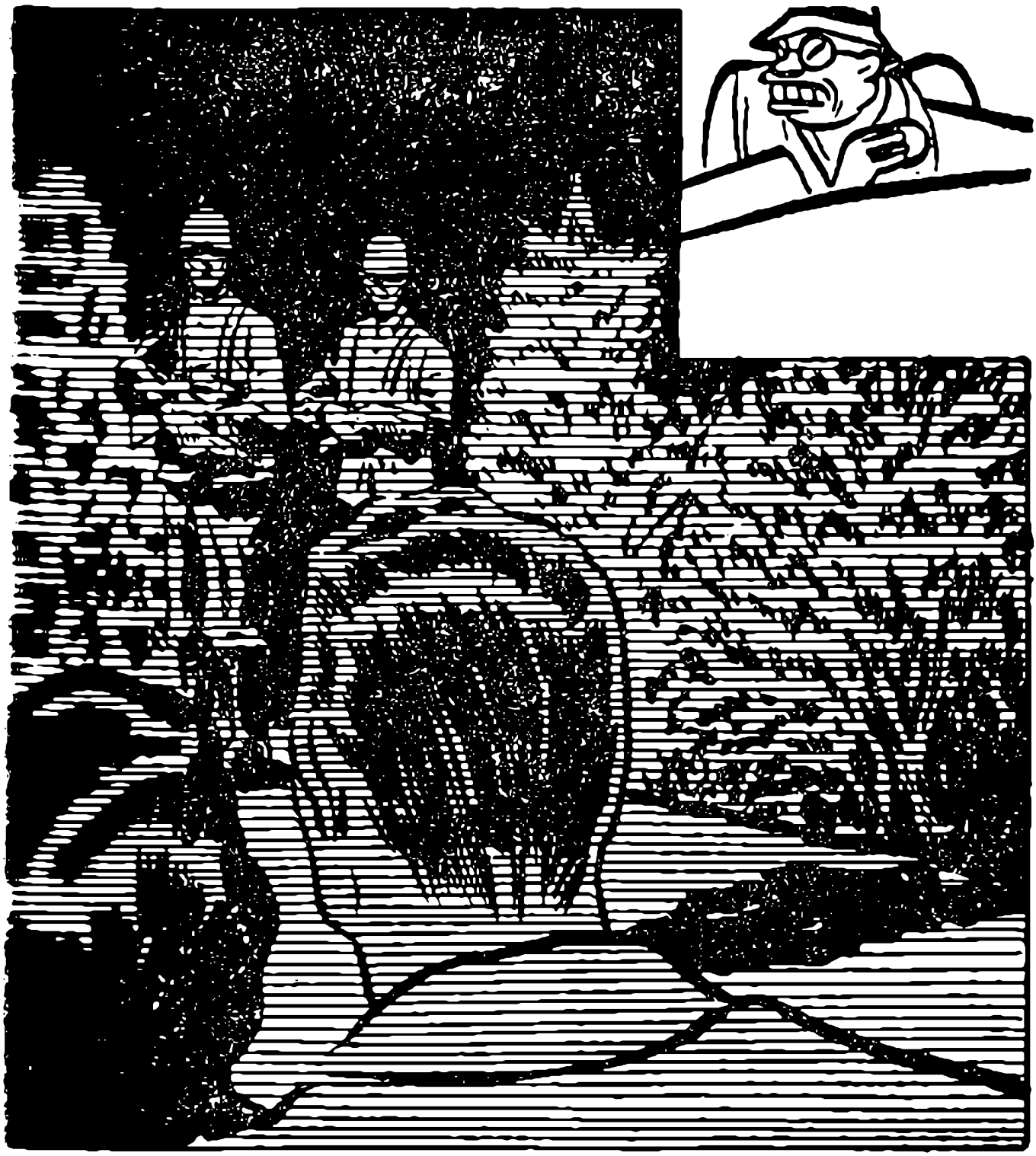
The Ship Taxied Across the Field

CHAPTER III

IN ENEMY HANDS

There was no use for Chuck and Joyce to try to escape. The soldiers were on all sides of them with bayonetted rifles. Chuck held up his hands and a moment later he and the girl were roughly seized and searched for weapons.

They were led toward the burning plane. There seemed to be

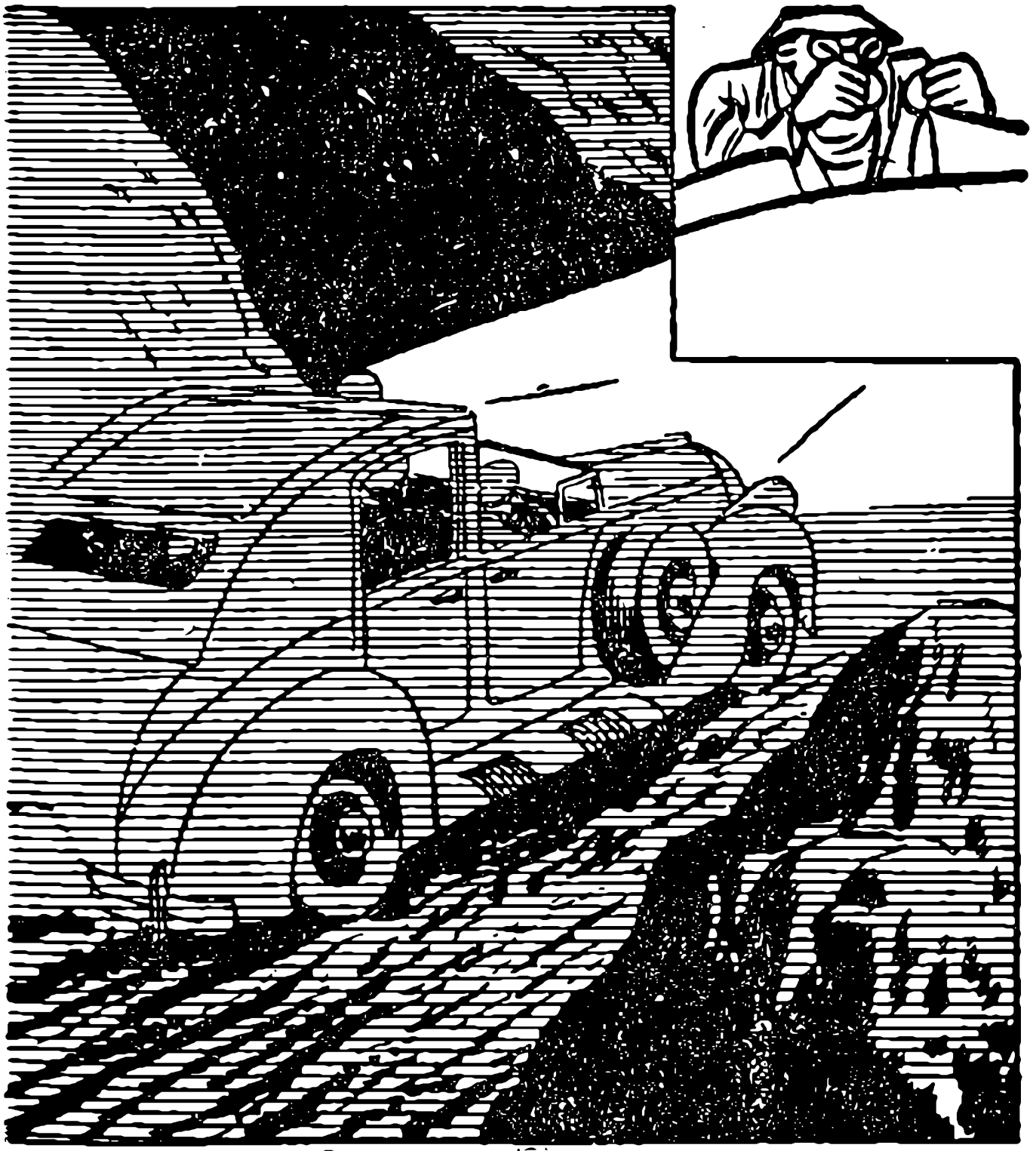


Chuck and Joyce Could Not Escape

quite a detachment of soldiers searching a ravine a short distance from the plane, but as Chuck and Joyce were brought into view, these men left off their search and came to inspect the prisoners.

A short time later an automobile pulled off a rough road near the scene of the crash and stopped near where Joyce and Chuck were held prisoner.

A short, rotund officer in uniform stepped from the car and ap-



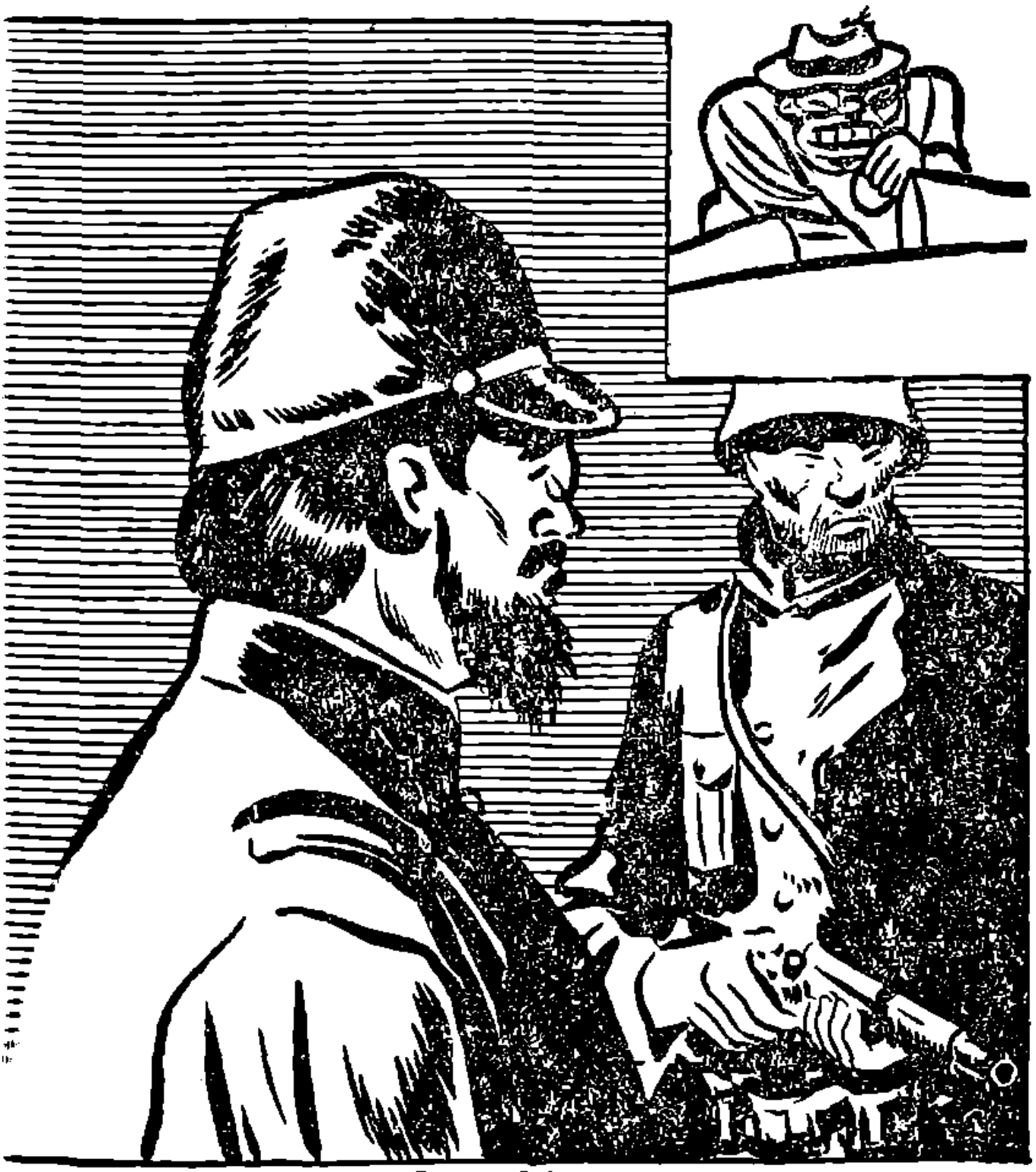
'A Car Pulled Off the Rough Road

proached the prisoners. The car's headlights brilliantly illuminated the scene and the soldiers came smartly to attention as the officer, apparently a high ranking one, approached.

The officer cast his slanted eyes at the prisoners and then addressed them.

"Name, please?"

Chuck and Joyce repeated their names, which were jotted down by the officer in a notebook.



"Name, Please!"

"What doing here, please?" the officer asked.

"We were flying and we had an accident," Chuck said uncertainly. "Our plane caught fire and we had to bail out."

"You say plane have accident? What is cause of accident, please?"

Chuck looked at Joyce who nodded. It was best to tell the truth even in these circumstances.

"We were shot down by some planes," Chuck admitted.

"We Had an Accident."

"So? You are shot down by planes? Most unfortunate. Perhaps Chinese pilot make some mistake."

"Whatever the trouble was, we'd like some help."

"I am Captain Ishii at service," the officer said, bowing. "First, some questions, please. What nationality, please?"

"We are Americans," Chuck answered.

"So? American? Why are Americans in China?"

"I Am Captain Ishii."

"We were flying to meet a friend of ours, another American." Joyce said eagerly.

"You fly? Where?"

"We were on our way to Chungking," Chuck admitted.

"So? You and girl fly alone to Chungking. Most remarkable. Follow me, please."

Chuck hesitated. "Where are you taking us?"

"Captain Ishii help you," the officer said, laughing shortly. "Yes.

"We Are Americans."

Captain Ishii big help. Enter car, please."

A soldier stepped up behind Chuck and gave him a push. A second push sent Joyce into the car, sprawling on Chuck's lap.

"Say!" Chuck shouted, half angrily at the soldier. But Captain Ishii cut him off.

"No more talk, please. Soon have plenty chance to talk!"

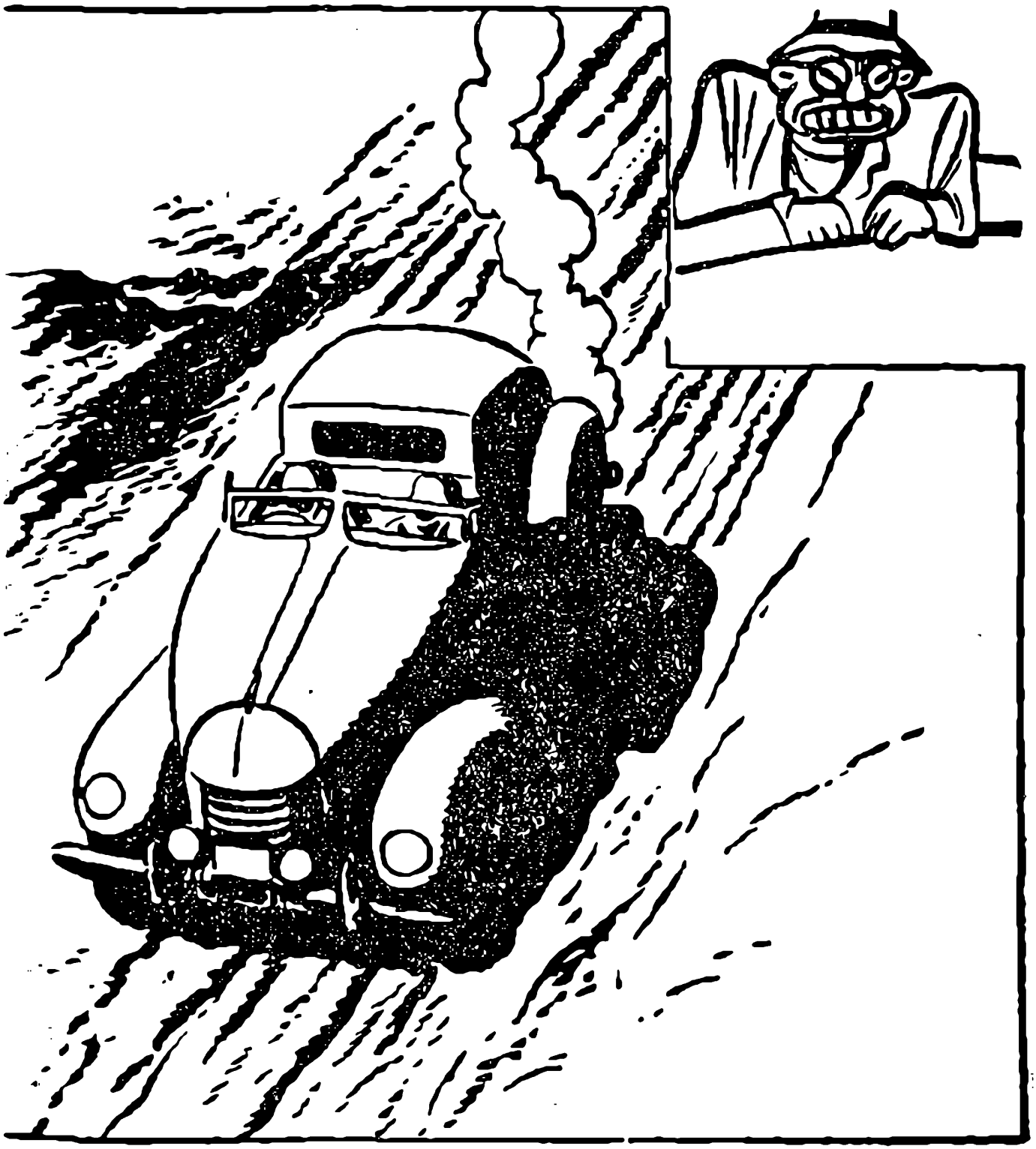
The car lurched forward carrying the prisoners toward a destin-

"Enter Car, Please!"

ation which Chuck felt was not so good.

The car carried them along a rough road that bore scars of modern war. From time to time the machine was forced to follow detours around deep craters left by bombs and shells. Along the route were ruined houses and an occasional village reduced to a few charred walls.

At last the car reached a town in a better stage of preservation than

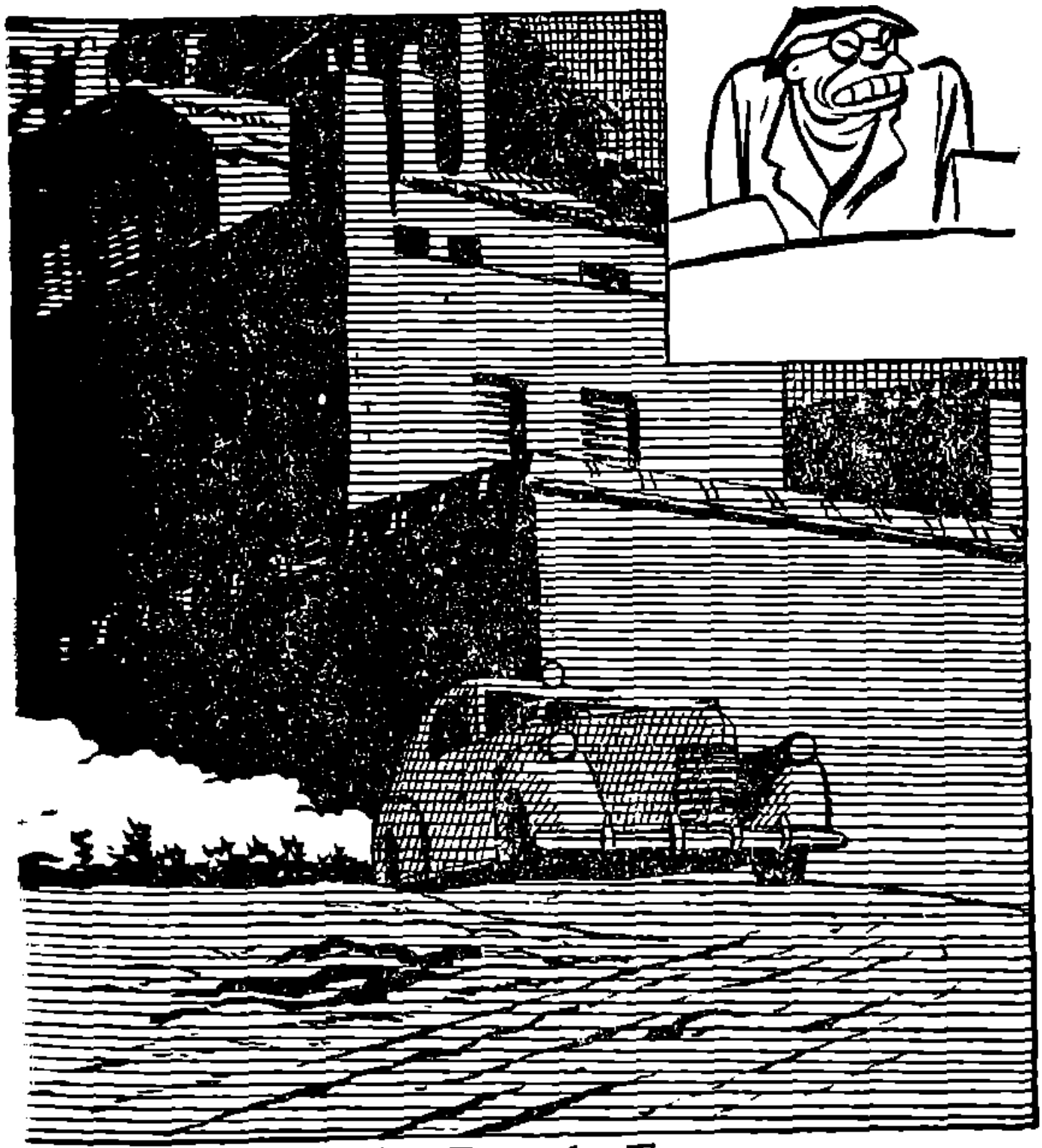


The Car Lurched Forward

the rest. The car stopped and Chuck and Joyce, under the watchful eye of Captain Ishii, were marched through a large courtyard filled with soldiers.

The prisoners were taken to a building and halted in front of a heavy door. Captain Ishii knocked and a gruff voice answered.

As the door was opened, the prisoners were led into the chambers of another Jap officer, stocky and muscular, who watched



They Entered a Town

the young Americans with a cat-like gleam in his slanted eyes.

"What have we here, Captain Ishii?" the officer asked.

"Americans, Colonel Goto," replied the captain. He broke into his native tongue, apparently telling of the capture of Chuck and Joyce. Goto listened and turned to Chuck.

"You are an American army officer?" he inquired.

"No," Chuck said. "We are civilians. We were flying from Hong-

"Americans, Colonel Goto."

kong to Chungking to visit a friend of ours."

"Hm-m. What is name of friend?" Colonel Goto inquired.

"Why," Chuck stammered, "his name is Steel."

"So!" A vicious smile spread over the colonel's face. "Not Mr. Steel, perhaps, but Major Steel of American Intelligence. Is that not so?"

Chuck did not reply. If this Colonel Goto knew of Major Steel, he

"What Is Name of Friend?"

might know what happened to the major in Chungking. It indicated that Colonel Goto would not be friendly.

"An American Intelligence Officer, is he not?" the colonel demanded again.

Still Chuck made no answer. He would not reveal the name of an Intelligence Officer. Chuck was not even supposed to know that Major Steel was an Intelligence Officer. although Chuck did know, of

"Perhaps Major Steel?"

course.

"MISTER Steel is a friend of ours. We wanted to visit him," Joyce said, trying to protect Chuck.

"That does not answer my question," the colonel said, gruffly.

Both Chuck and Joyce became silent. The officer waited for an answer and when none came, he said:

"Very well, Mr. Ramsay, perhaps you will be more inclined to talk

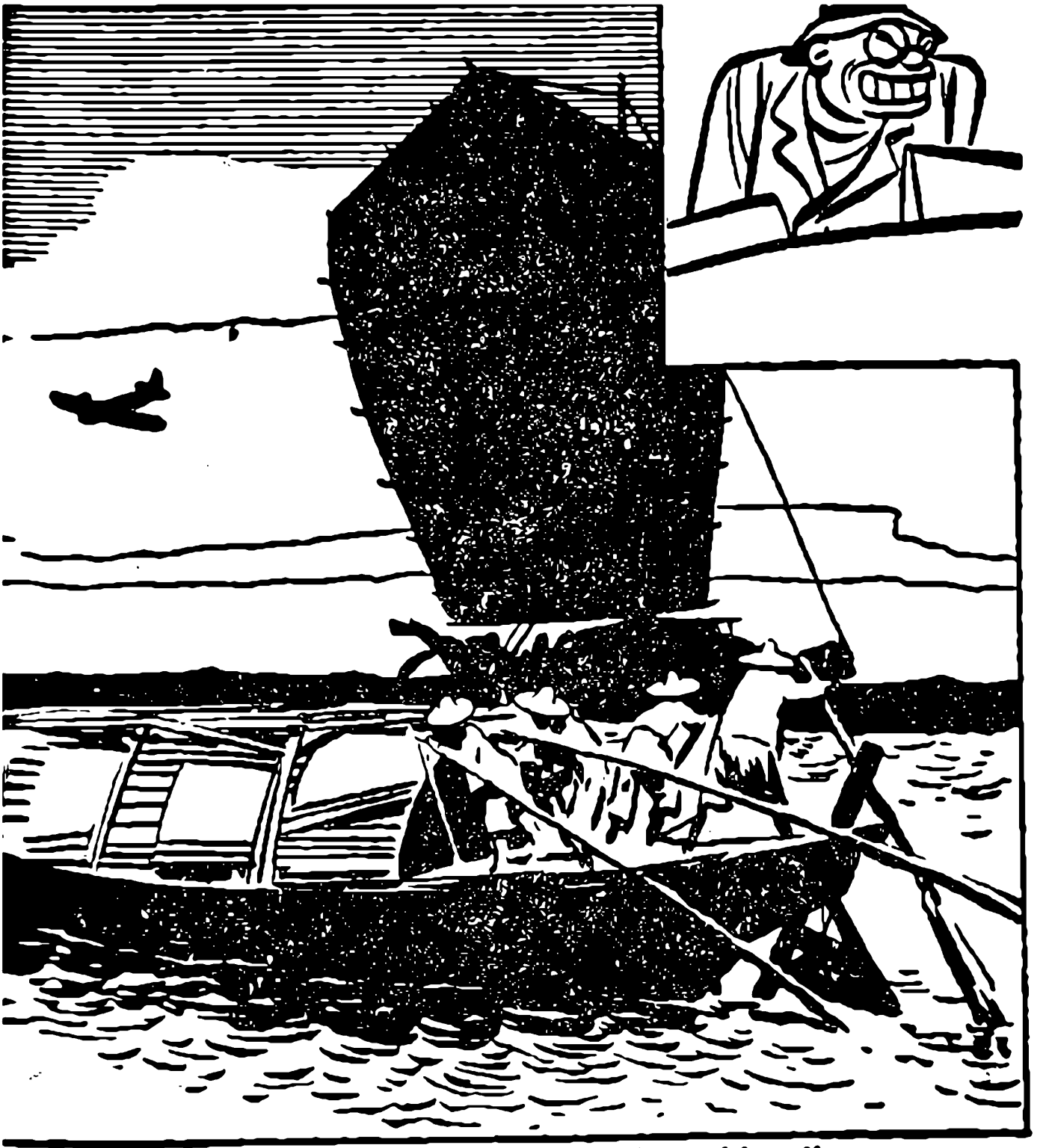
"Mister Steel Is Our Friend."

later."

"Pardon, please," Captain Ishii interrupted. "Young American boy say he and girl fly plane alone. Maybe he not tell truth."

The colonel snorted in rage.

"He does not know that our agents are aware that Captain Midnight, the leader of the Secret Squadron, and three of his agents were flying to Chungking from Hongkong! We have reason to believe, Mr. Ramsay and Miss Joyce



"They Were Flying to Chungking."

that you are two of Captain Midnight's agents!"

Still the Americans refused to reply.

"You two claim to be innocent travelers on your way to Chungking, but the innocent traveler does not have anything to conceal," Colonel Goto continued. "He answers every question promptly. You do not. You know this country is at war. All strangers must be under suspicion—especially those who do

"You Are Considered Spies."

not answer questions. Why are you in China? You do not say. Such persons are to be considered spies!"

A sudden chill swept up Chuck's spine as he realized that it was an inflexible rule of warfare that spies must be shot!

"Take them away, Ishii!" Colonel Goto ordered.

As the prisoners were led away, Colonel Goto's evil face lit in a grim smile.

"Take Them Away, Ishii."

"Fools," he said. "They do not realize that my men shot them down!"

Chuck and Joyce were taken to a high, dungeon-like building and through a dark corridor. As they walked the distant tolling of a bell came to their ears. It was a clock, and Chuck counted the slow strokes.

Seven o'clock.

Glancing through a window, Joyce noted a cross on top of a

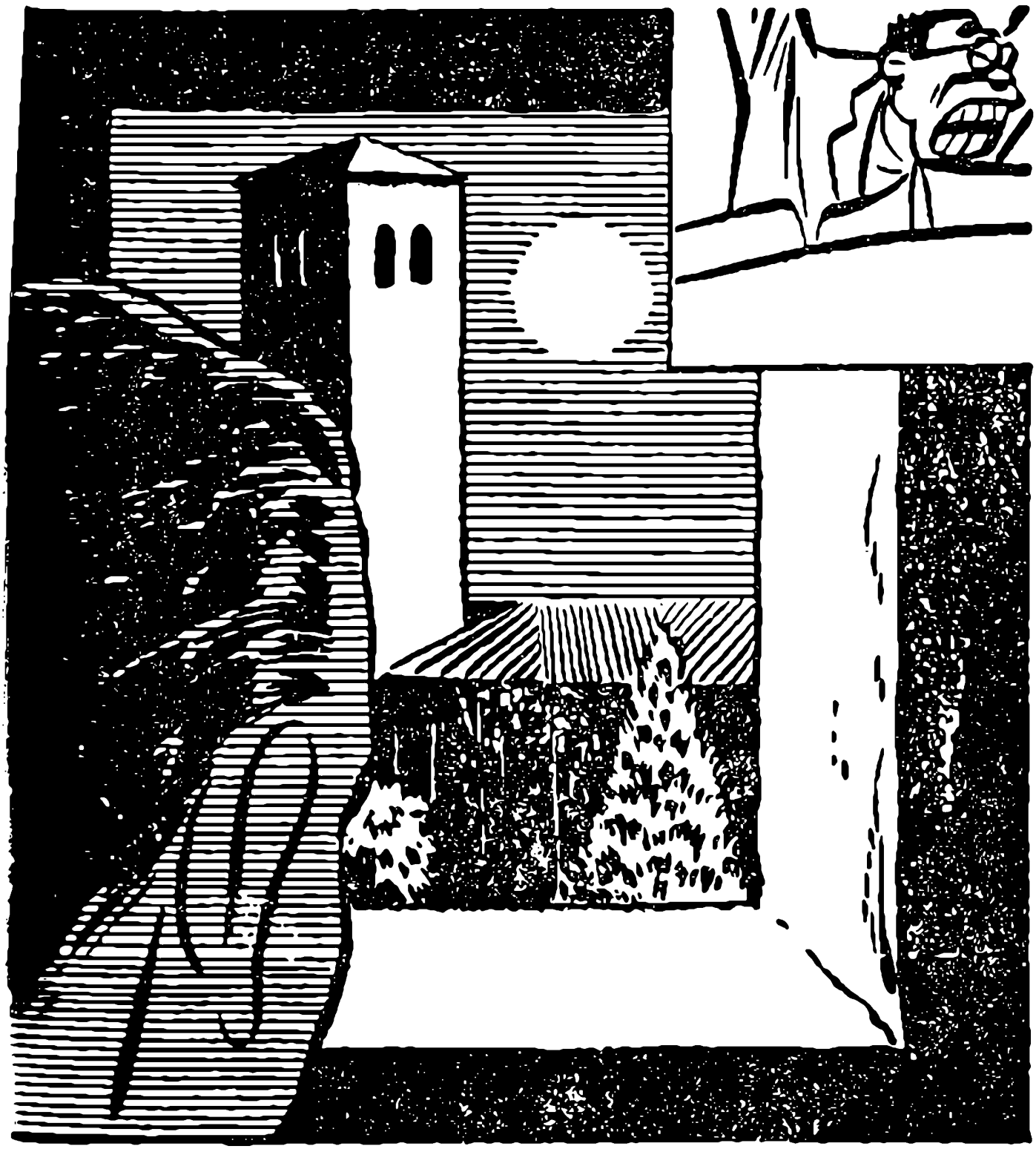
They Were Taken Through a Dark Hall

building. That building was the one that held the bell. It was a church mission, possibly containing American missionaries.

"Colonel Goto wish to make American boy and girl comfortable," the captain said. "Has made plan for pleasant surprise for you both."

"Pleasant surprise?" Joyce asked wonderingly.

"Yes, miss. Colonel Goto say spy should have pleasant surprise. You



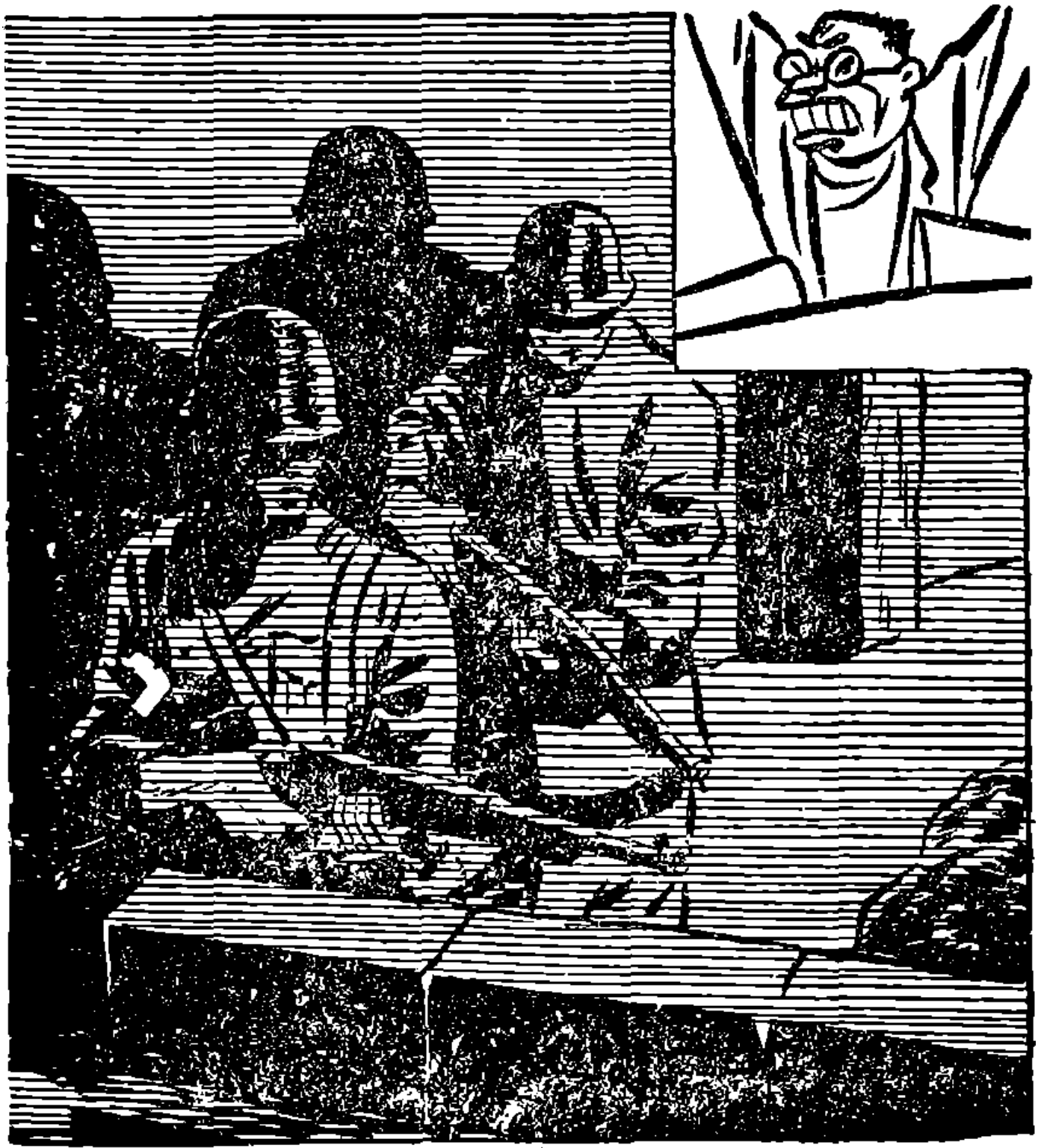
There Was a Church Mission

will enter, please."

Chuck and Joyce entered the cell. The steel door clanged behind them and Captain Ishii's footsteps faded away. For a moment the Americans blinked their eyes, growing accustomed to the dimly lighted cell.

Joyce's hand shot out and caught Chuck by the arm.

"Look, Chuck," she whispered excitedly. "There's a man lying on the floor in the corner."



"You Will Enter, Please."

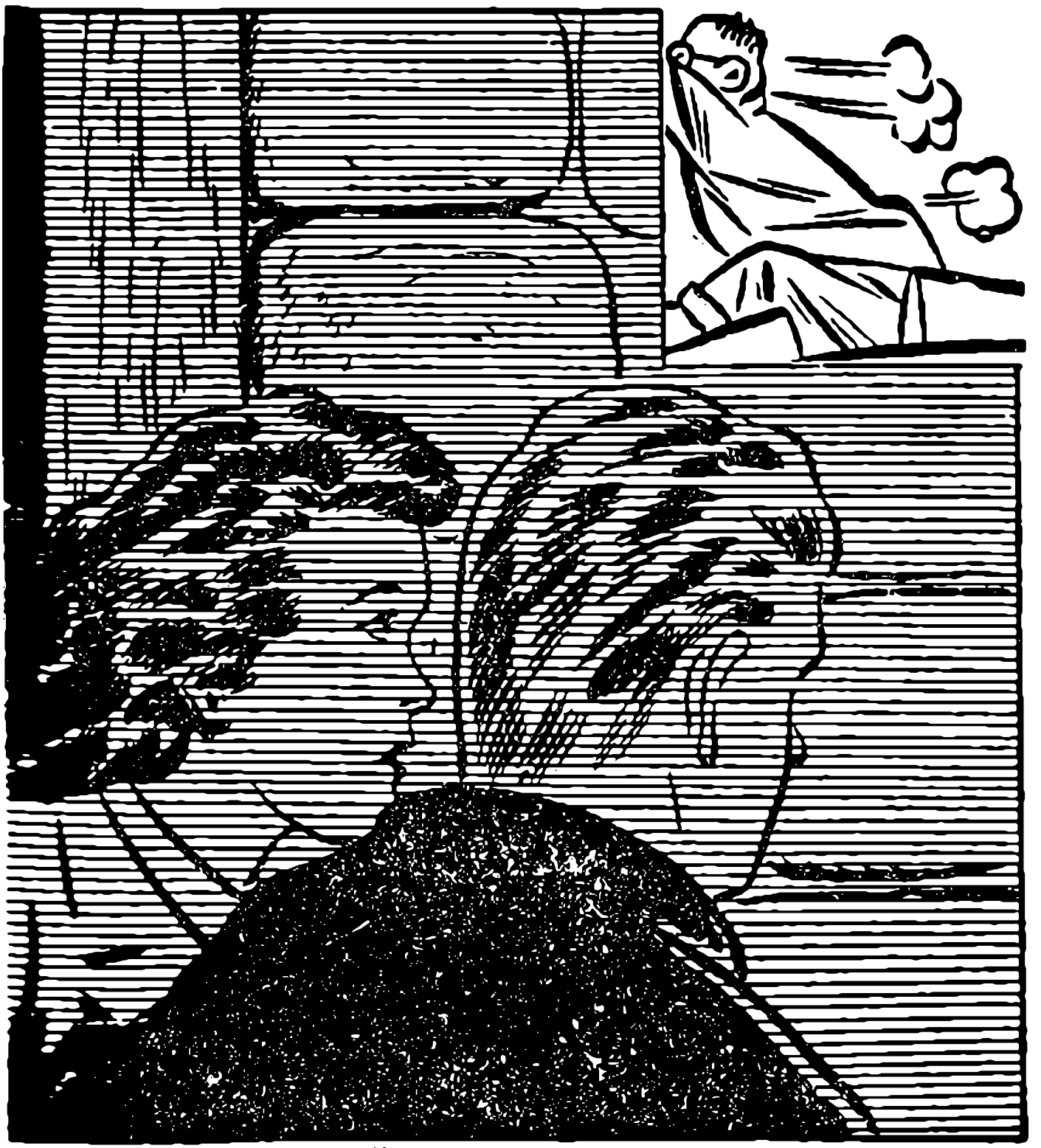
"So it is!"

Chuck moved cautiously across the room, followed by Joyce. He halted beside the man, asleep on a pallet of straw on the floor. The man stirred and turned his head and Chuck dropped to his knees beside the sleeping figure.

"Oh!" Joyce gasped.

"Blazin' beacons!" came from Chuck.

The man asleep on the floor of the cell was the man they had trav-



"There's a Man on the Floor!"

eled across the Pacific Ocean to see.

It was Major Barry Steel of the United States Army Intelligence.

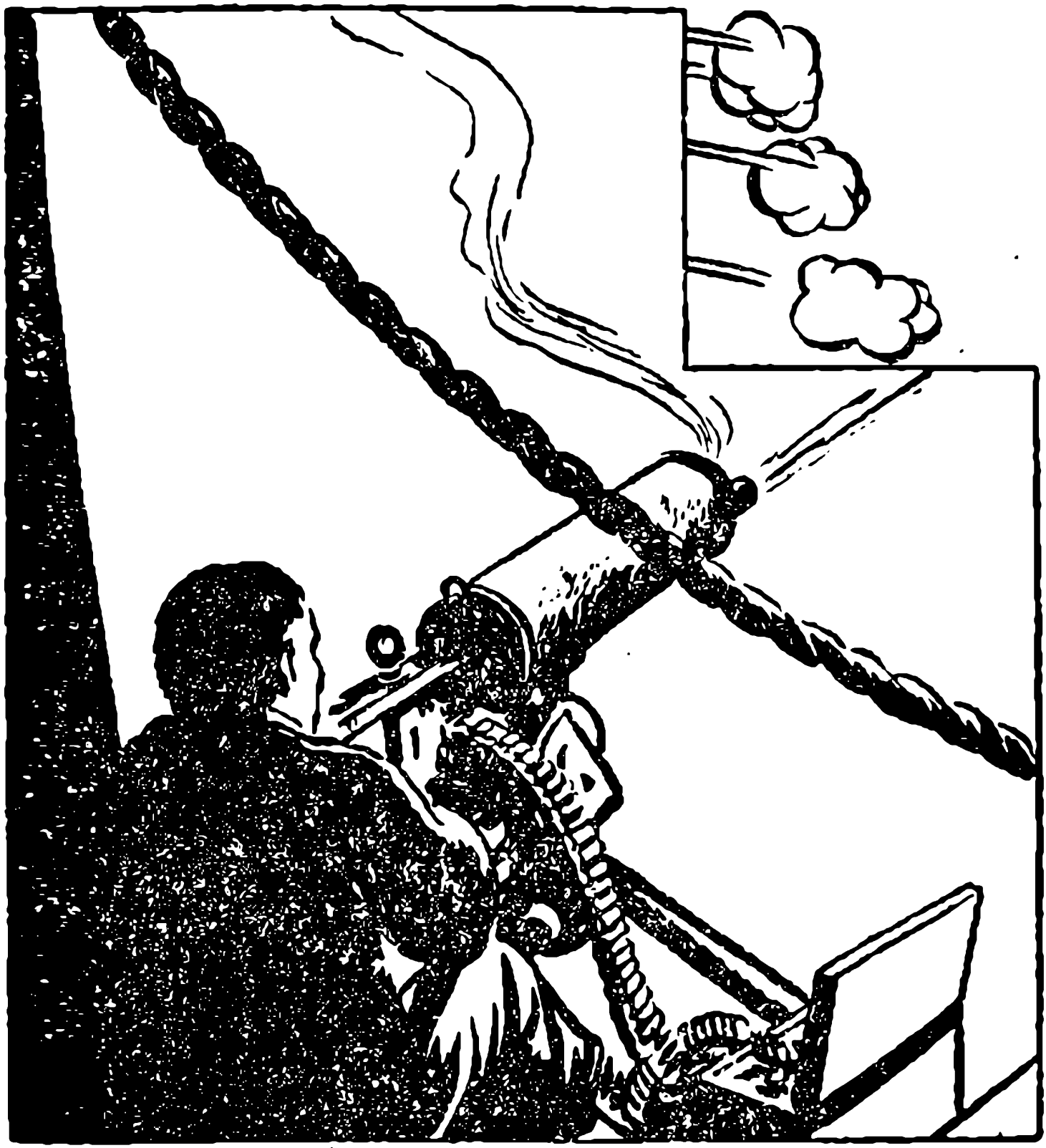
It Was Major. Barry Steel

CHAPTER IV

A DOGFIGHT

A murderous blast of fire came from a machine gun in a foxhole near the tent hangar as the plane bearing Captain Midnight and Ichabod Mudd moved out across the landing field.

Another nest opened up, and bullets whistled under the wings of the speeding plane.

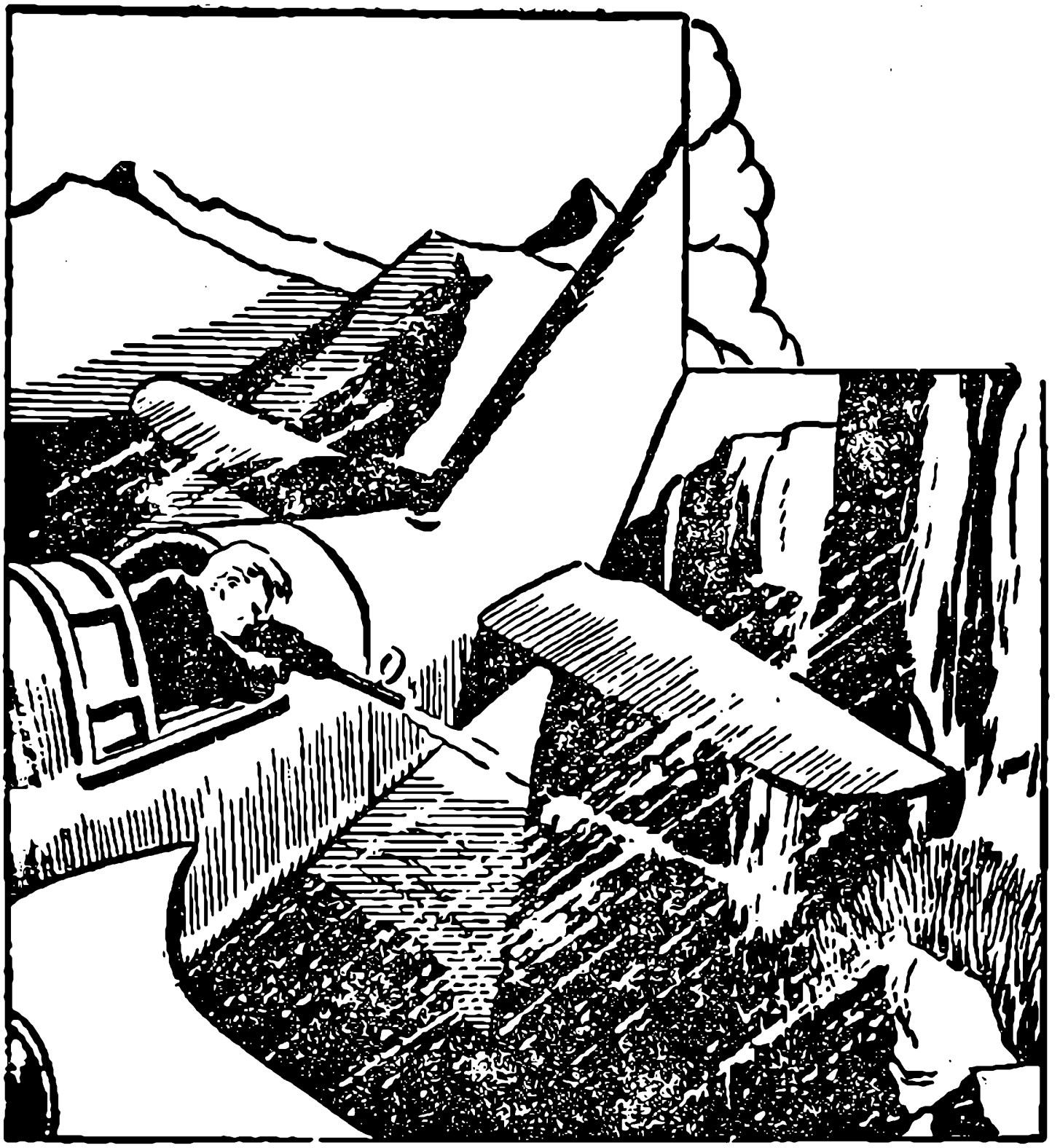


Bullets Whizzed After the Plane

But Mudd, stationed in the tail of the ship, whipped his own gun into action as the ship left the ground.

Bullets tugged at the ship's fuselage and for a second Captain Midnight thought the engine had been hit. Then he discovered the reason the plane moved so slowly off the ground: the craft was carrying a full load of bombs.

Mudd shouted a warning into the communications telephone from the rear of the plane.



He Whipped His Gun into Action

"They're bringin' out some pursuit planes!" he called.

"We'll fix 'em!" Captain Midnight replied.

He banked the plane sharply and circled above the landing field. Then his hand jerked on the bomb-release and the "eggs" dropped downward from the plane.

The soldiers on the ground below sensed what was going to happen and scrambled for safety. Several loud explosions sounded in suc-

The "Eggs" Dropped Downward

cession as the bombs landed among the pursuit planes that had been pushed from the hangar.

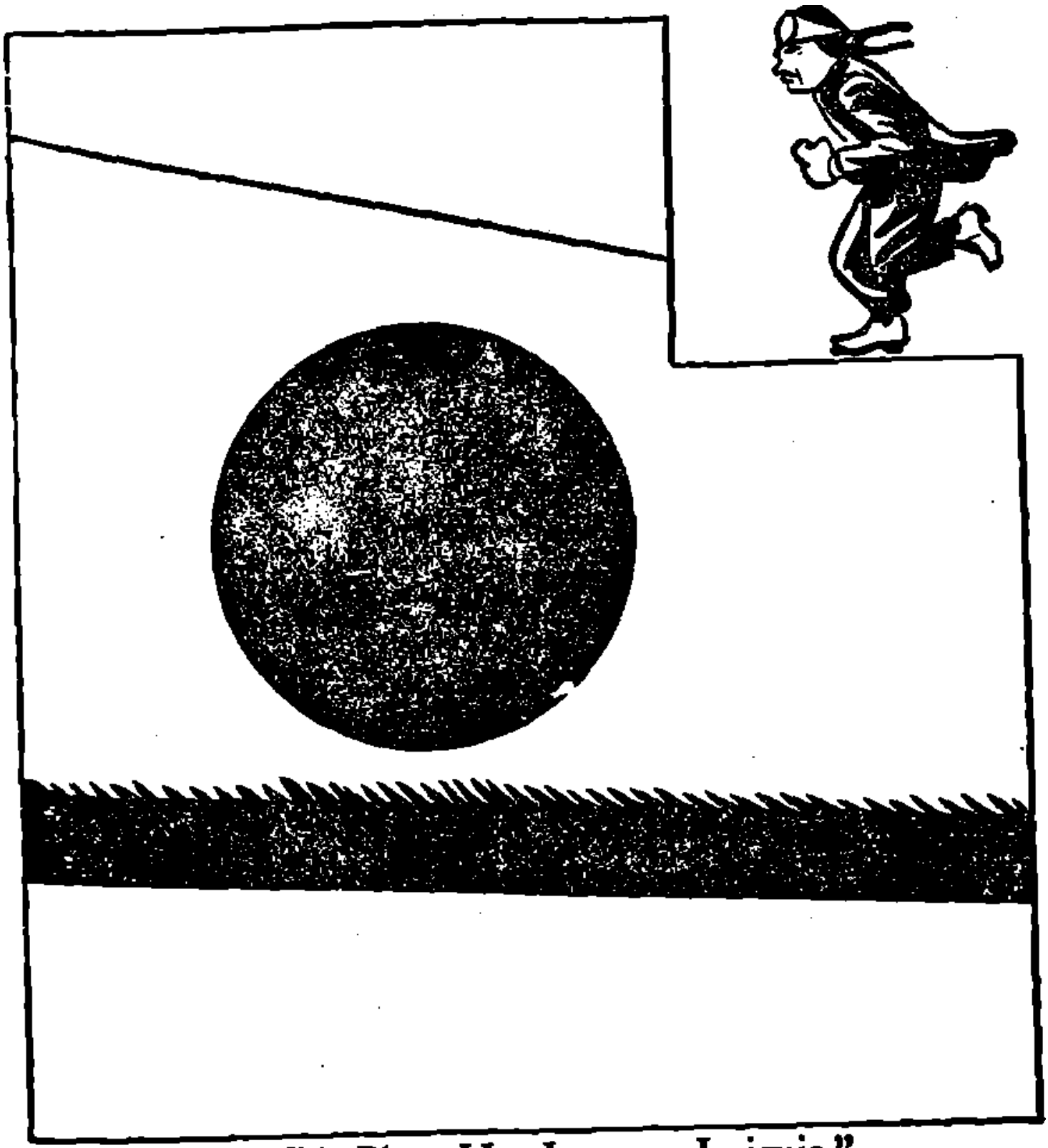
"That'll keep us safe for a few minutes," Captain Midnight said grimly. "But this country's thick with flying fields and the invader probably has been warned. We'll have to keep our eyes peeled for planes looking for us."

"Well, clean my carbon! If you ain't always takin' the joy out of life!"

Loud Explosions Sounded

"And that isn't all, Ikky," Captain Midnight told his friend, who had left the rear gunpit and crawled forward so he could talk to Captain Midnight directly. "This plane is marked with the insignia of Japan, and we'll have to dodge Chinese anti-aircraft fire and fighter planes."

Captain Midnight gauged his direction northwesterly by means of the compass on the bomber. He rose to an altitude of ten thousand feet



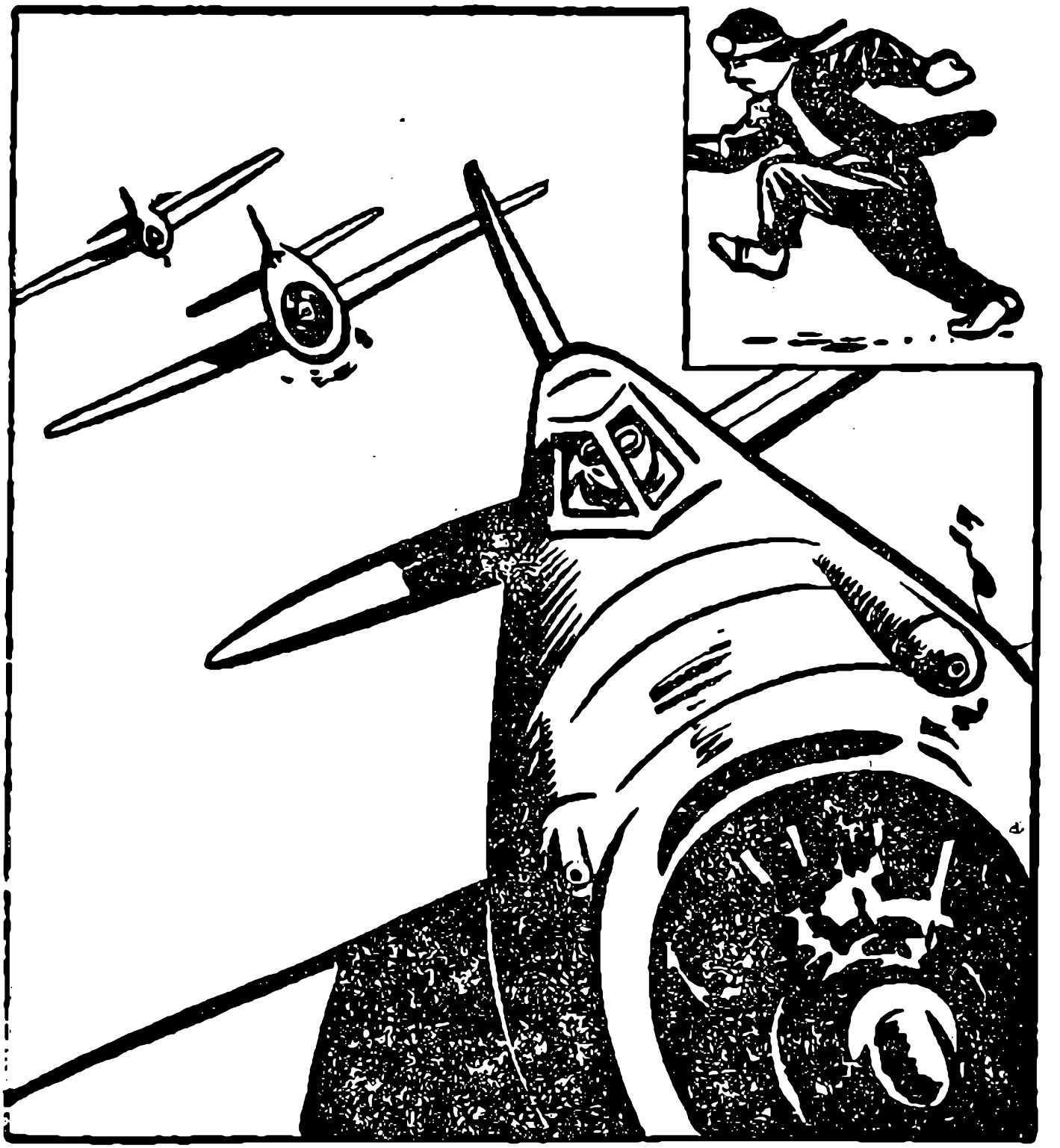
"This Plane Has Japanese Insignia."

and gave the craft full speed.

Suddenly Mudd nudged the captain and pointed ahead. Three black specks were coming to meet the bomber.

"Just as I expected," Captain Midnight said. "They've sent out a warning to intercept us. We've got to blast our way through those fighters."

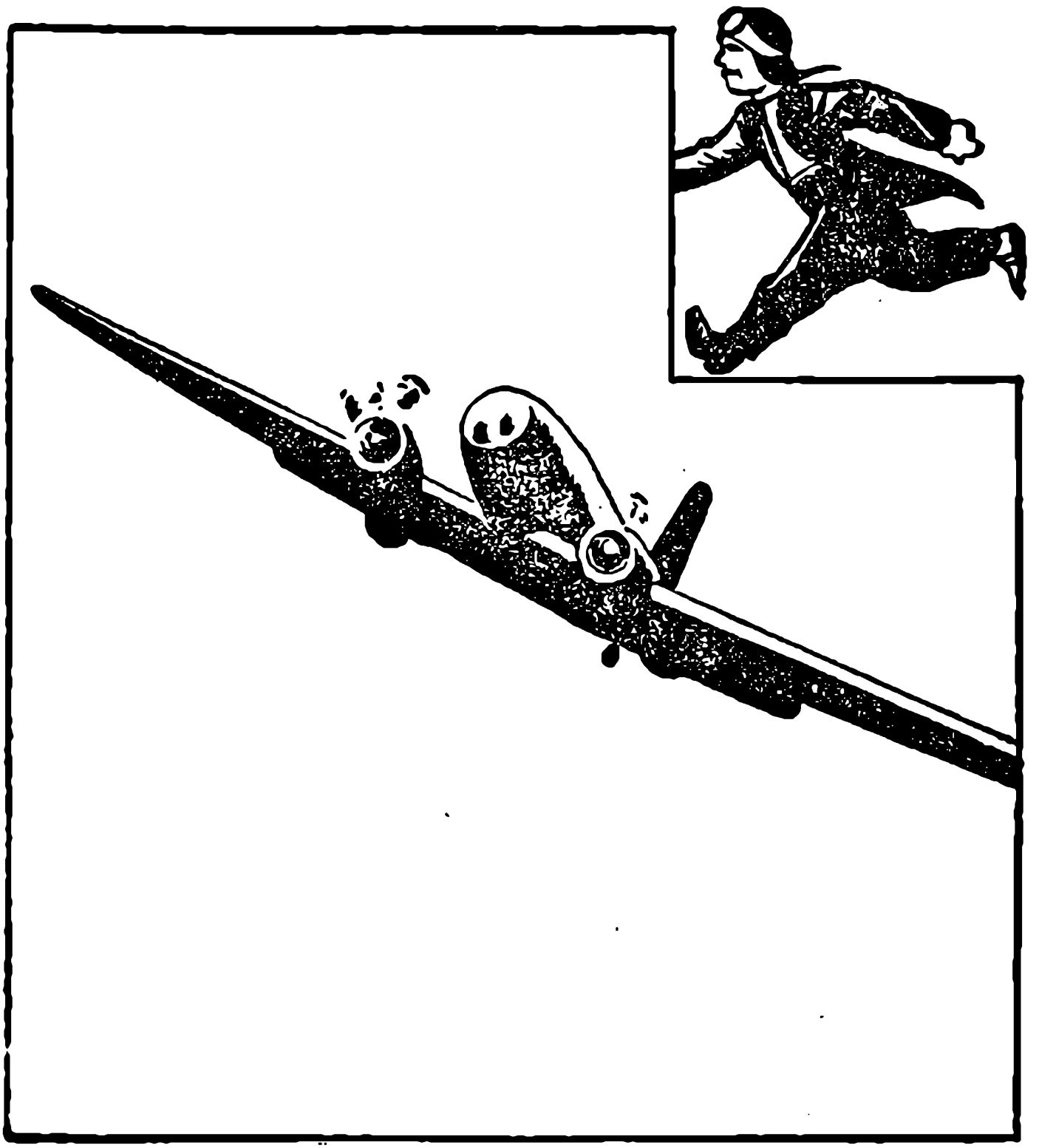
"And we're liable to meet a lot more of these babies," Ikky groaned. He scrambled out of his seat



Three Fighter Planes Appeared

and took his post by the rear machine gun.

Captain Midnight nosed his plane up to meet the pursuit ships. His hand moved quickly and a burst of fire shot from the nose guns on his ship. Mudd's gun was coughing and Captain Midnight saw one of the attackers wobble in flight and lose altitude. But there was no time to watch it fall. At that instant the engine coughed. A bullet had found a vulnerable spot in



He Nosed the Plane Up

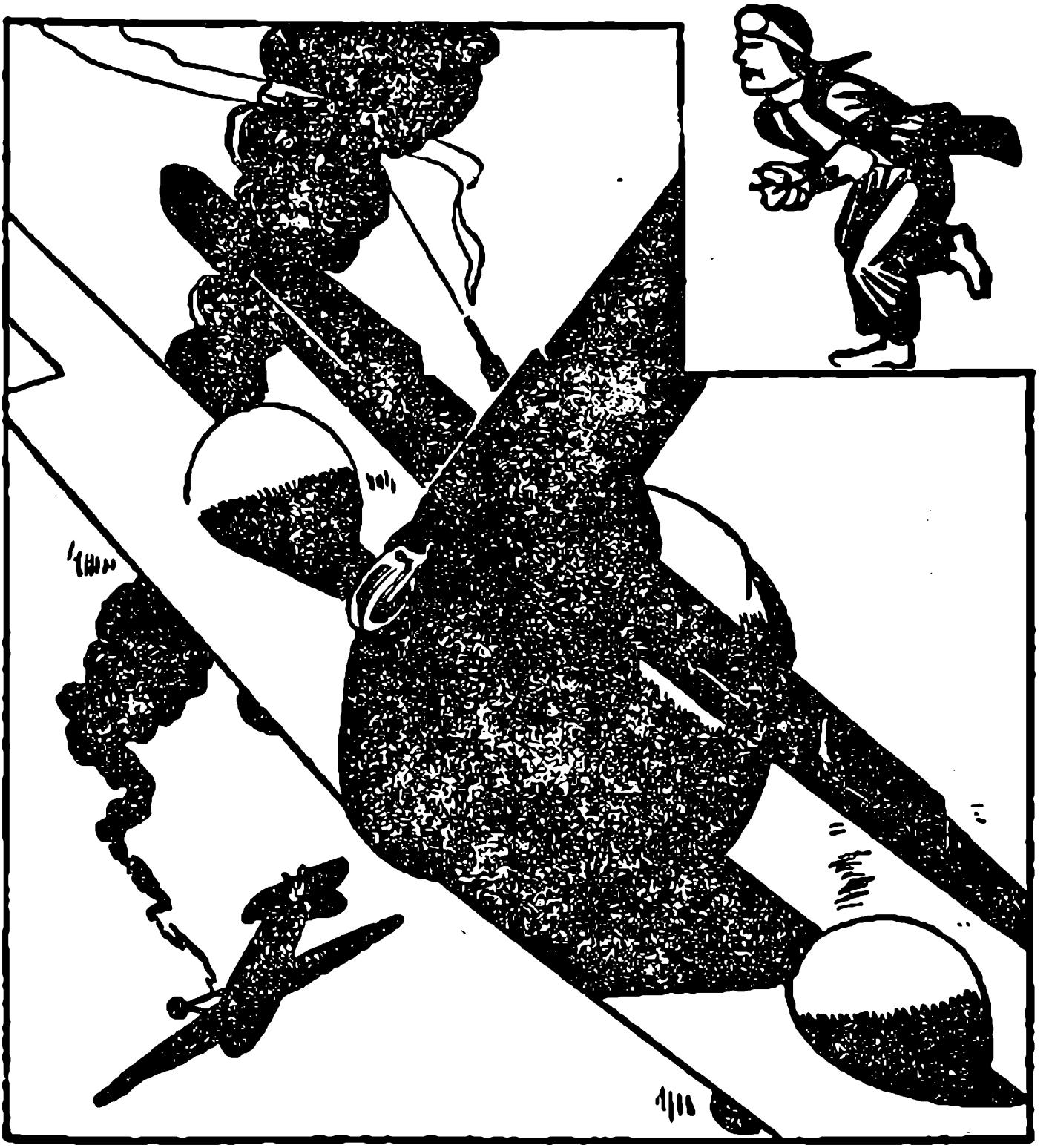
the bomber.

But Captain Midnight moved his craft up to meet the attackers. One by one the ships shuddered and fell away. All three fighters had been accounted for in a few brief instants.

"Okay, Cap'n Midnight!" Mudd called over the communications phone.

"I'm all right, but our port engine's out," the aviator replied.

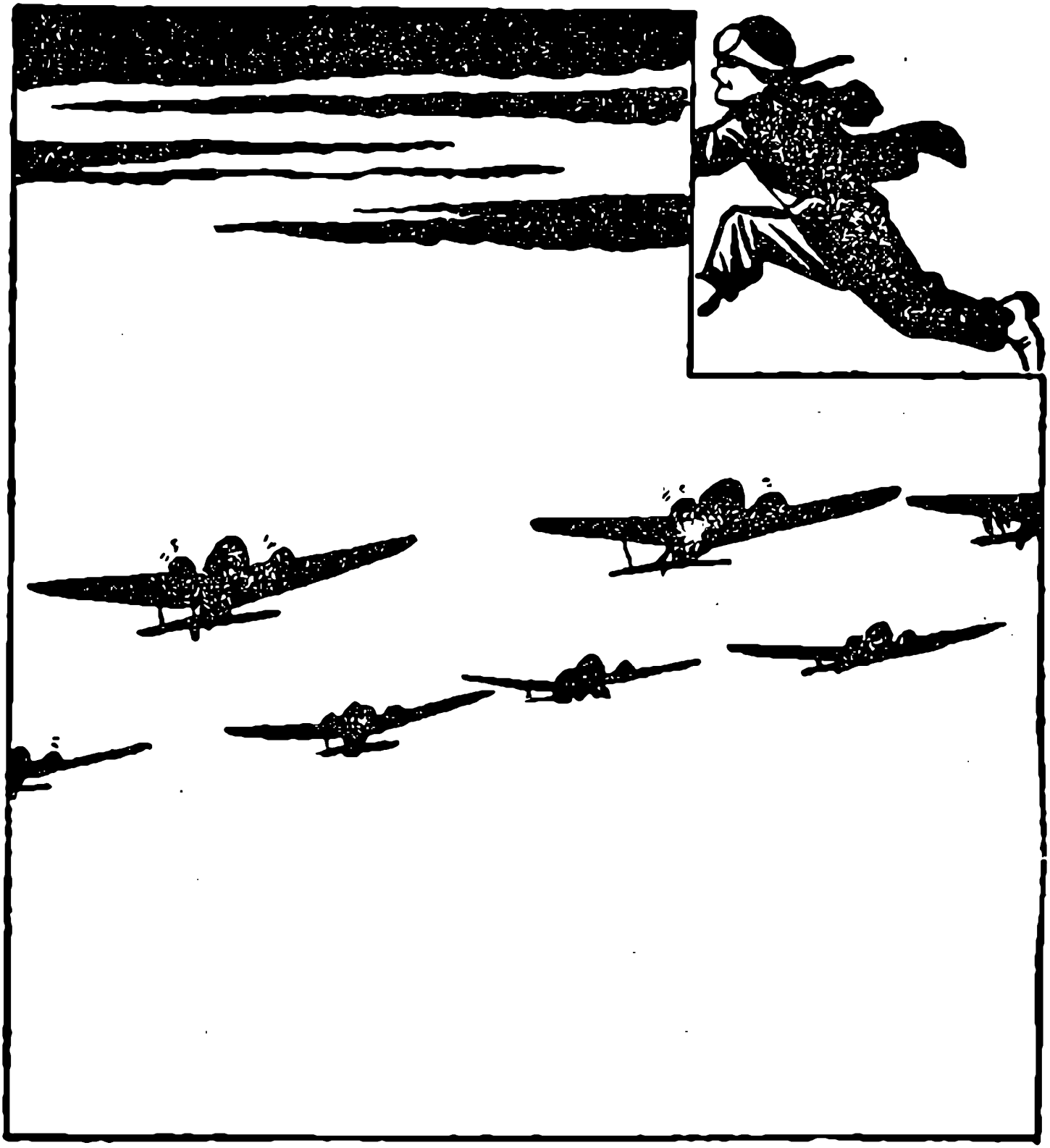
Ichabod Mudd groaned. "We



They Brought Down the Planes

ain't got a chance! Look ahead. There's another formation comin' over there. How are we gonna get through to Chungking on one engine and fight a hundred planes on the way!"

In the dungeon of the Chinese village, Chuck and Joyce renewed their acquaintance with Major Steel. The young Americans told of their trip across the Pacific in an amphibian plane and the adventures that had led to their capture.



Another Formation Appeared

"I think I know who's responsible for your being here," Major Steel said. "I am in a position to know. I was lured from Chungking and then—well, here I am."

"Colonel Goto?" Joyce asked.

"Colonel Goto is pretty bad," the major admitted. "He has one of the worst reputations in the Orient. He's a Jap who is working with the most dangerous outlaw of all times."

"Who?" Chuck asked.

"Colonel Goto Is Pretty Bad."

"Well," the major said, "for many years China has been terrorized by a ruthless white man who has built up a vast criminal organization. At one time this man was in the confidence of the officials of China. But he was a traitor and now he's against China for his own personal gain. His real name isn't known and where he came from isn't known, but he is called The Barracuda!"

"The Barracuda!" Chuck and

"He Is Called the Barracuda!"

Joyce exclaimed.

"Yes. A fitting name. The barracuda is the monster fish of the tropical seas. He's just as cruel, relentless and treacherous."

"And Colonel Goto is working with him!"

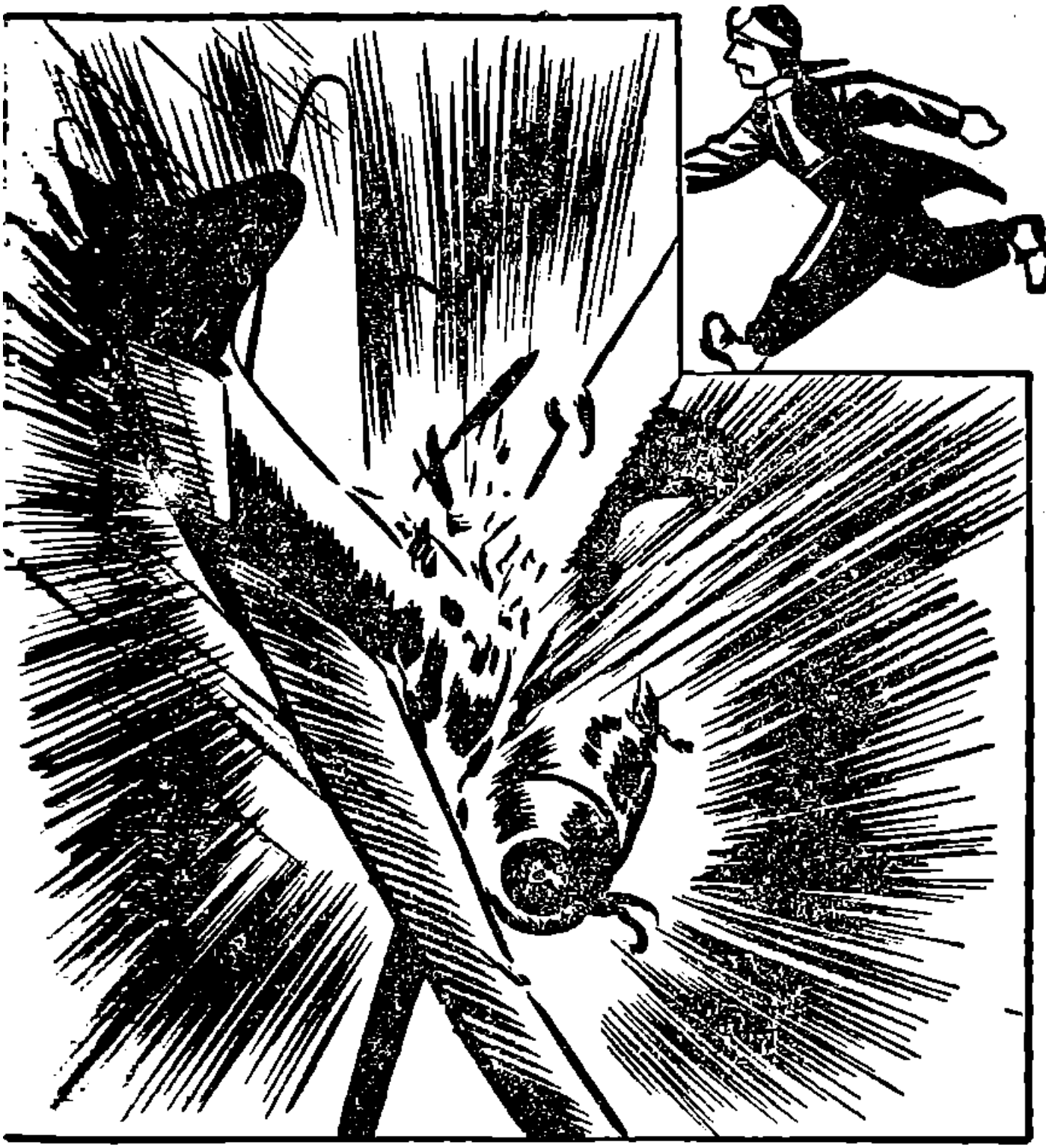
"The colonel is reputed to be at the head of a squadron of Japanese suicide fliers, known as Wolf Pilots, probably the ones who shot you down."

"Why are they suicide pilots?"

"Colonel Goto Is Working for Him!"

Joyce asked.

"They are taught that the only way to gain a rich reward in the next life is to die in battle. They are reckless and if one of them thought there was any doubt of his being able to shoot you down, he'd ram you with his plane. In dive bombing it's the same story: often Wolf pilots fly their planes into the target. This is a job for the Secret Squadron and that's why Captain Midnight is here. Only his fliers



"He's Head of the Wolf Pilots."

can cope with these Wolf Pilots."

Through the morning the prisoners were left alone. The clock at the mission tolled eight, nine, ten and eleven o'clock. At last it struck twelve, and the prisoners heard marching steps coming down the corridor. The steel door clanged and swung open and Colonel Goto's harsh voice snapped:

"Attention!"

Chuck and Joyce rose to their feet. Major Steel stood up weakly.

The Steel Door Swung Open

for he was ill from his long incarceration. Behind Colonel Goto an evil-faced white man entered the room. He was a small man, tense and nervous, with greenish eyes that seemed to bore through the prisoners. Instinctively Chuck knew that this man was the renegade known far and wide as The Barracuda!

The white man addressed Major Steel:

"You went too far when you

This Was the Barracuda

ordered the commander of the Secret Squadron to fly across the Pacific, Major," The Barracuda said. "There is no room in Asia for the Secret Squadron. If you will give me your word of honor to withdraw the Secret Squadron back to America you will be allowed to go in peace. Otherwise—you will never return."

"Keep me here if you wish, but allow this boy and girl to go," Major Steel pleaded.

"You Went Too Far, Major."

Cuda shook his head.

"Most certainly not, Major Steel. Chuck Ramsay and Joyce are important agents of the Secret Squadron. They work directly under Captain Midnight. They cannot return."

"Don't promise him anything, Major Steel," Joyce said defiantly. "We're with you to the end!"

Cuda turned to the girl. "Those are very unwise words. You three are in my power. I also have Cap-

"You Three Are in My Power."

tain Midnight and his mechanic. None of you shall ever return to your home."

"You can't frighten us," Chuck said bravely. "We're not afraid to die."

"Perhaps not, Mr. Ramsay," Cuda said suavely. "But I can promise you that before Colonel Goto and his men are finished with you death will seem the most desired-for thing on earth." Cuda turned to Colonel Goto. "The rites

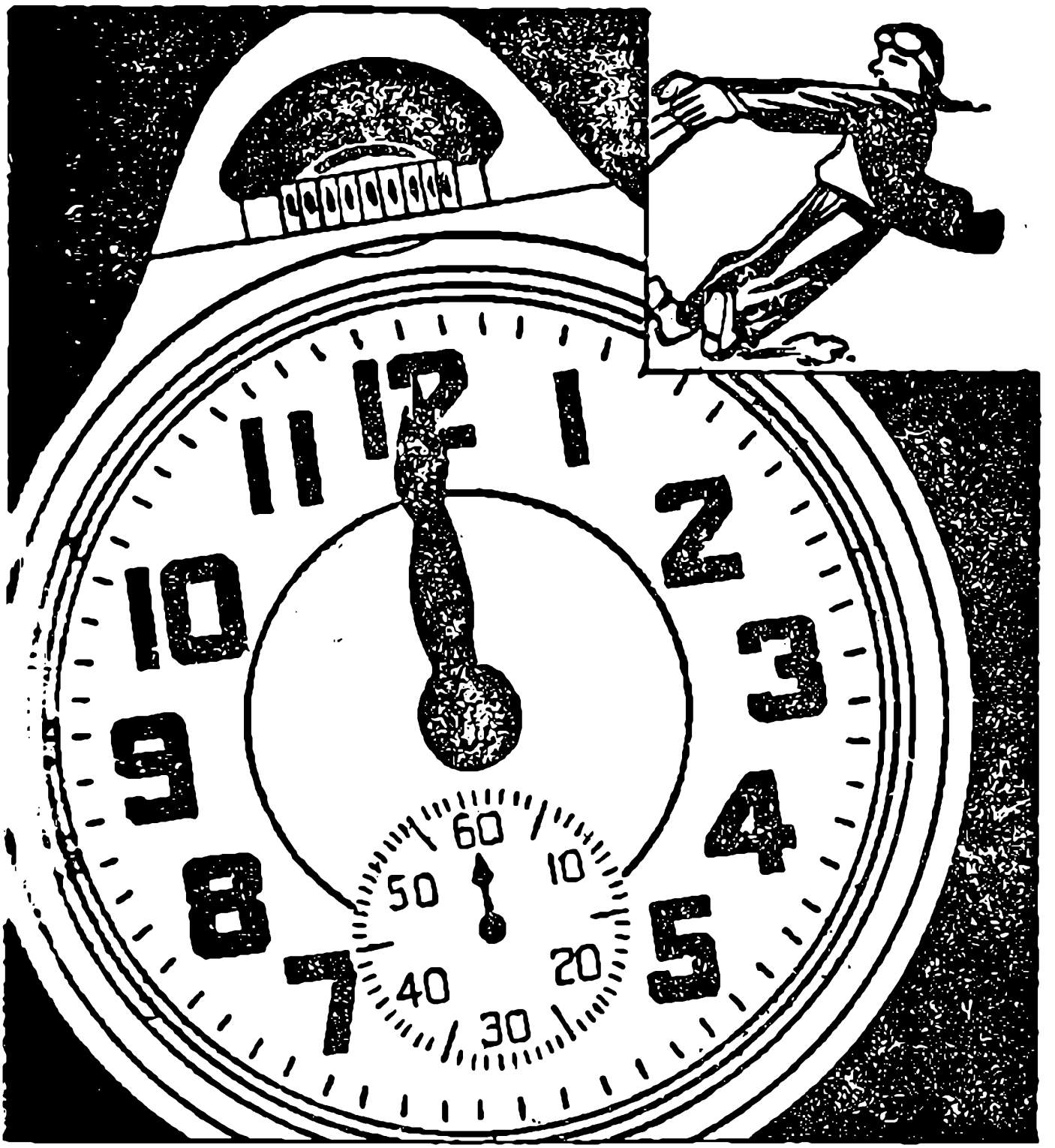
"You Can't Frighten Us!"

have been prepared, have they not, Colonel?"

The Colonel nodded, his eyes gleaming.

"I'll give you time to reconsider, Major Steel," Cuda continued. "It is now about noon. I'll give you twelve hours. Then I must have your answer."

The Barracuda turned on his heel. Followed by Colonel Goto he left the cell. The steel door clanged after them and a key turned in



"I'll Give You Twelve Hours."

the lock. The three prisoners looked from one to another.

"We won't change our minds," said Chuck.

"Then I Must Have Your Answer."

CHAPTER V

MIDNIGHT

Twelve hours passed swiftly, in spite of the fact that the prisoners were confined in a dungeon. Soon after Colonel Goto and The Barracuda visited them, silent guards brought bowls of rice and stale tea. This might be their last meal.

Chuck counted the passing hours as the bell at the mission tolled.

They Again Visited the Prisoners

Eleven o'clock passed. Chuck looked at Major Steel.

"The time is almost up," he said.

"Yes, Chuck," the major declared. "I've been thinking of a night a long time ago during the first World War. It was a night when the Allied armies faced a desperate situation—a night when a certain young captain in the American Air Force flew across the enemy lines taking a thousand-to-one chance that he wouldn't return. But he did

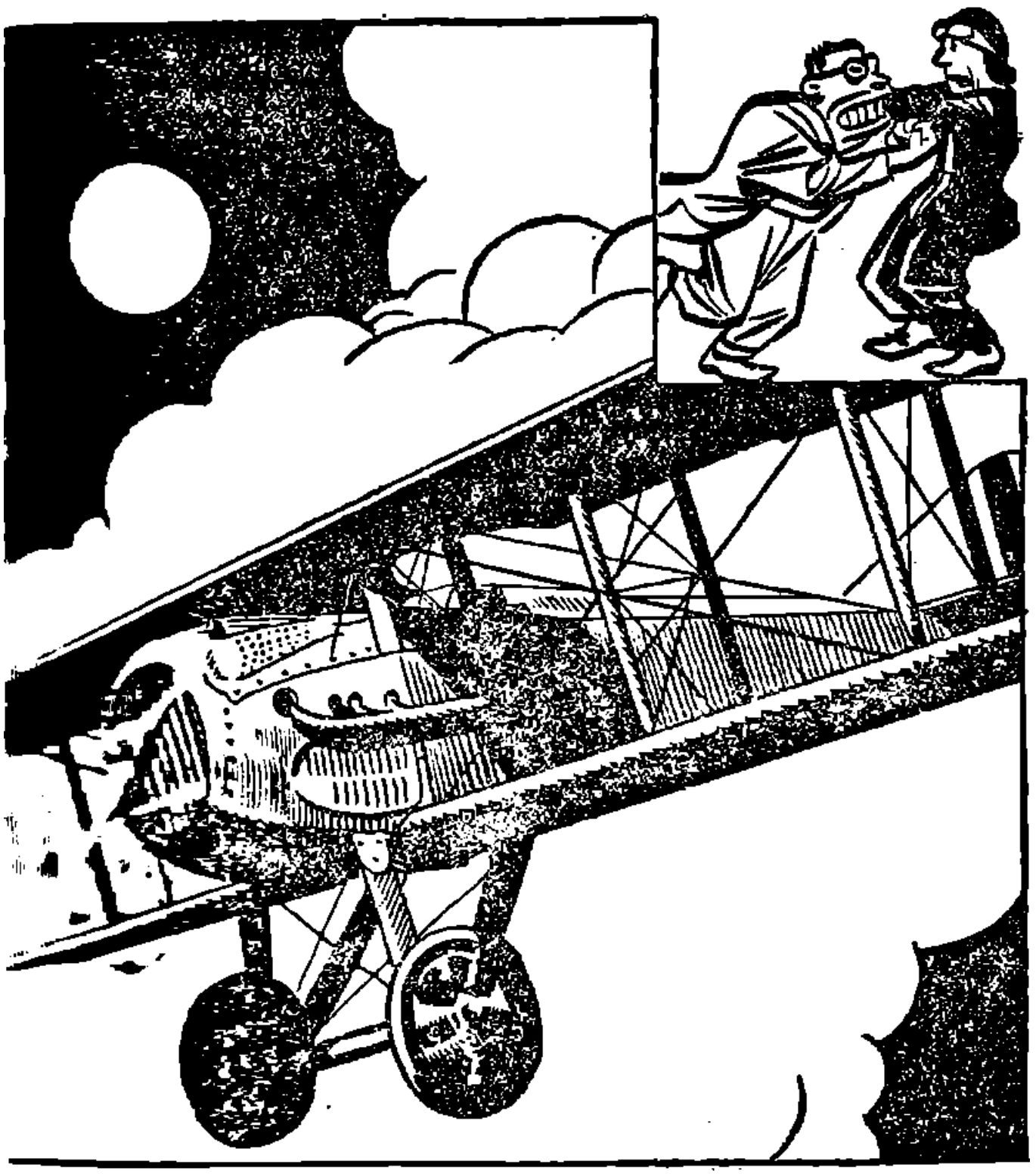
"The Time Is Almost Up."

return at midnight and he earned the title by which you know him so well: Captain Midnight. This time, instead of being in an airplane, he may be in prison as we are. If only he could help us!"

As the major finished speaking the sound of marching steps filled the corridor. The steps grew louder.

"They're coming for us!" Joyce said tensely.

A key turned in the lock and the



"He Flew Across Enemy Lines."

door opened. Colonel Goto's voice shouted hoarsely:

"Attention!"

The prisoners rose to face the colonel and The Barracuda who entered the cell.

"I trust you have been wise and have reconsidered," The Barracuda said.

Major Steel glanced sharply at his companions. Their chins were set and their eyes were steady. There was no weakening.

"They're Coming for Us!"

"The answer is NO!" Major Steel announced.

"Then the time is up," The Barracuda said. "Take them, Colonel Goto."

In the distance the bells began tolling twelve. One—two—Chuck's head cocked at an angle. He was listening. Faintly, in between the strokes of the bell was a familiar sound.

Three—four—

There was no mistake about it

The Mission Bells Began to Toll

The sound was the drone of a squadron of planes.

Five—six—

"Listen! Listen!" Chuck cried.

Seven—eight—

"What's that?" Colonel Goto asked, with a tremor of rage in his voice.

Nine—ten—

"It's Captain Midnight!" Major Steel said, incredulously.

Eleven—twelve—

"Captain MIDNIGHT!" cried

"Listen! Listen!"

Joyce and Chuck.

The Barracuda turned and motioned for Colonel Goto to leave.

"Lock the prisoners in. If this is Captain Midnight, I'll soon dispose of him."

The door closed after the renegades, but Chuck, Joyce and Major Steel were at the window, gazing at the flashes of anti-aircraft shells and beams of searchlights that were probing the sky above the town.

"It's Captain MIDNIGHT!"

The planes were coming in low, apparently heading for a parade ground the prisoners had noticed as they were being brought to the citadel. Machine guns were clattering now and the anti-aircraft fire had ceased. The planes were too low for the heavier guns.

Then Chuck noticed something else. Something white and billowing was floating through the beam of the searchlights.

"Parachute troops!" Major Steel

Searchlights Probed the Sky

exclaimed.

The tactics were obvious. While the low-flying planes were engaging the ground forces, parachute troops had been dropped from high-flying transports. Now these were landing and disposing of the ground crews.

For more than an hour explosions and small arms set up a din that indicated heavy fighting. Then the firing slackened and the prisoners awaited news of the outcome.

"Parachute Troops!"

The attack was a desperate gamble at best and either Captain Midnight and his men had been driven back or had won in a very short time.

Suddenly there were sounds in the corridor outside the cell. Not marching feet this time, and a few minutes later keys had turned the lock. Captain Midnight, Ichabod Mudd and a smiling Chinese officer stood in the cell with the prisoners.

"Thank heavens you made it!"

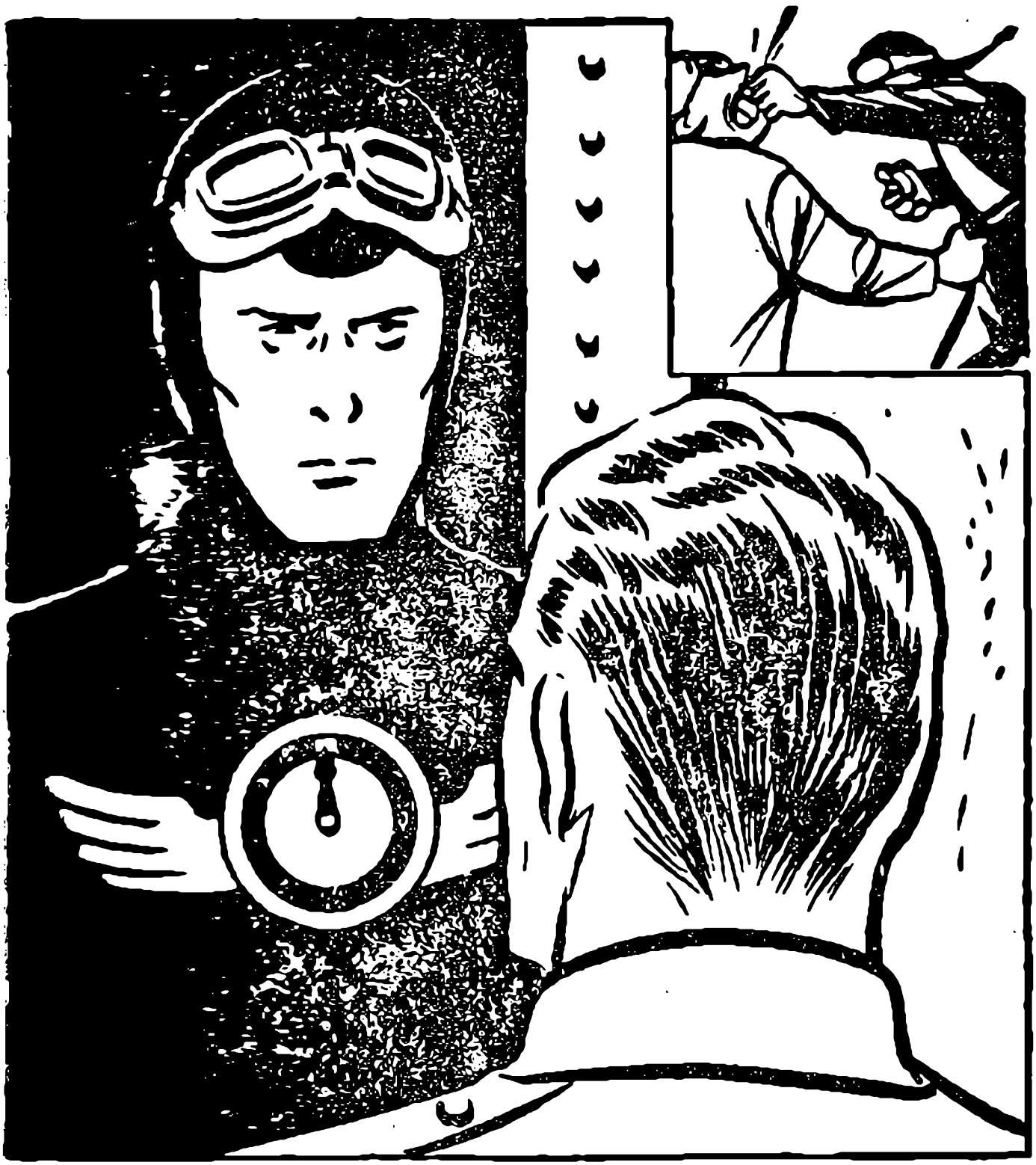
There Were Sounds in the Corridor

Major Steel said.

There were greetings and questions. The young Chinese flier was introduced as Major Sun of the Chinese Air Force, already a friend of Major Steel.

"Major Sun went to college in the United States and had his training at Kelly Field," Captain Midnight said.

Major Steel, weak and ill, was taken to the parade ground and made comfortable in Captain Mid-



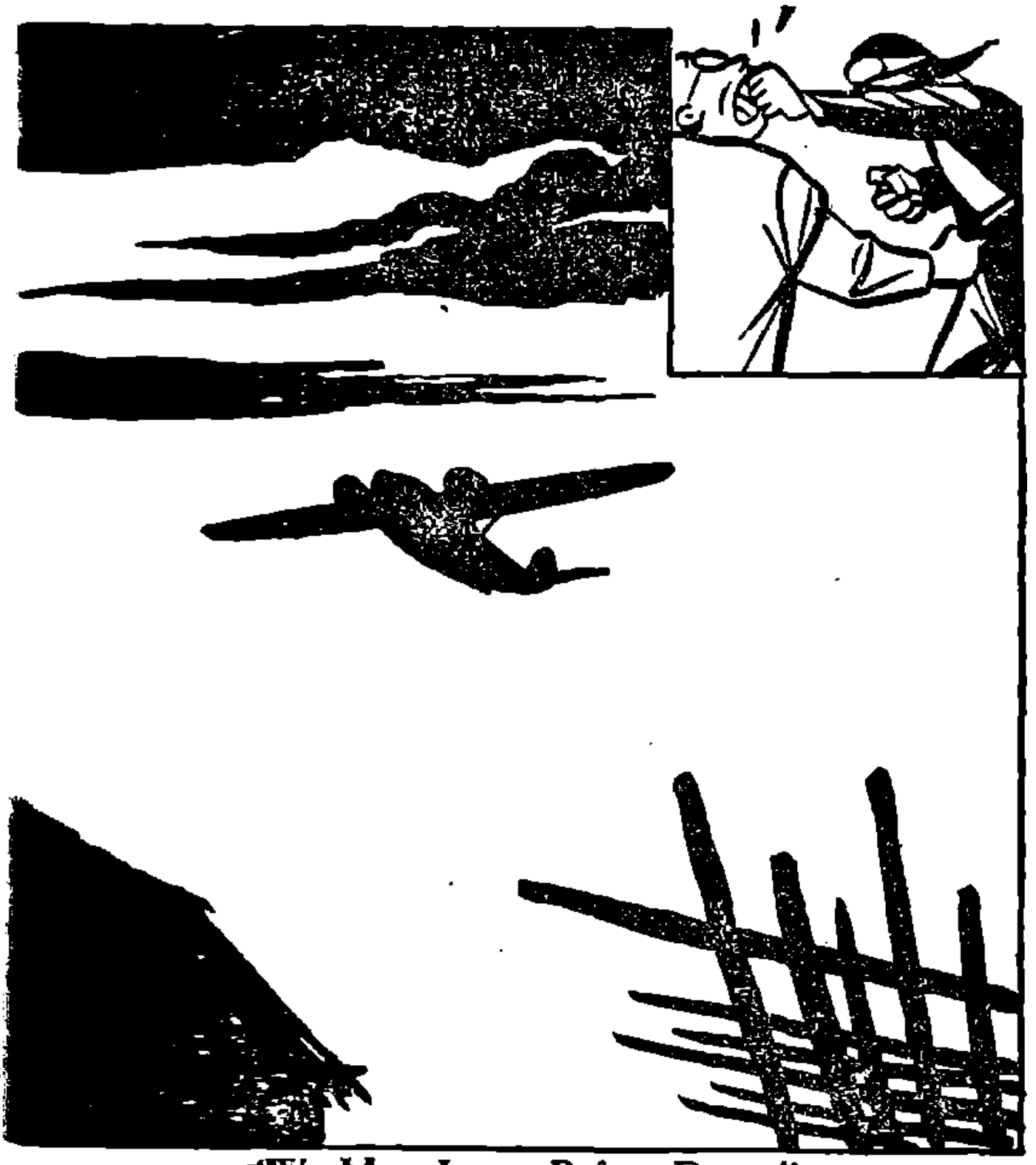
"Thank Heavens, You Made It!"

night's plane, an American amphibian.

"Our parachute troops are in command of the city, but they're holding on precariously. When the enemy is reinforced they'll counter-attack and then we'll be unable to hold on. We've got to leave before daybreak and it's one o'clock now."

The major nodded.

"Mudd and Chuck will come with me," Captain Midnight continued



"We Must Leave Before Dawn."

"We'll investigate The Barracuda's headquarters while we have a little time."

A few minutes later Captain Midnight and his two companions entered a beautiful home, not far from the dungeon where Major Steel, Chuck and Joyce had been held. The investigators entered a luxuriously furnished study and went through the desk. There seemed to be few items of importance.

"You can bet that The Barracu-

"We'll Search the Barracuda's Quarters."

da wouldn't have left important papers lying around," Captain Midnight said.

Chuck's eyes traveled over the walls, searching for something that might be a clue to a secret compartment. Captain Midnight likewise went over the furnishings of the room. Suddenly the captain's eyes fell on a teakwood table, very plain with a marble slab in the center.

Captain Midnight recalled he

He Noticed the Teakwood Table

had seen a table like it many years ago. He reached down and turned one of the legs. There was a sharp click and the piece of marble in the top opened up, revealing a small space beneath.

Within the compartment was a small packet of papers wrapped in an oilskin. Chuck's hand reached for the packet, but Captain Midnight caught the young man's arm and drew him back.

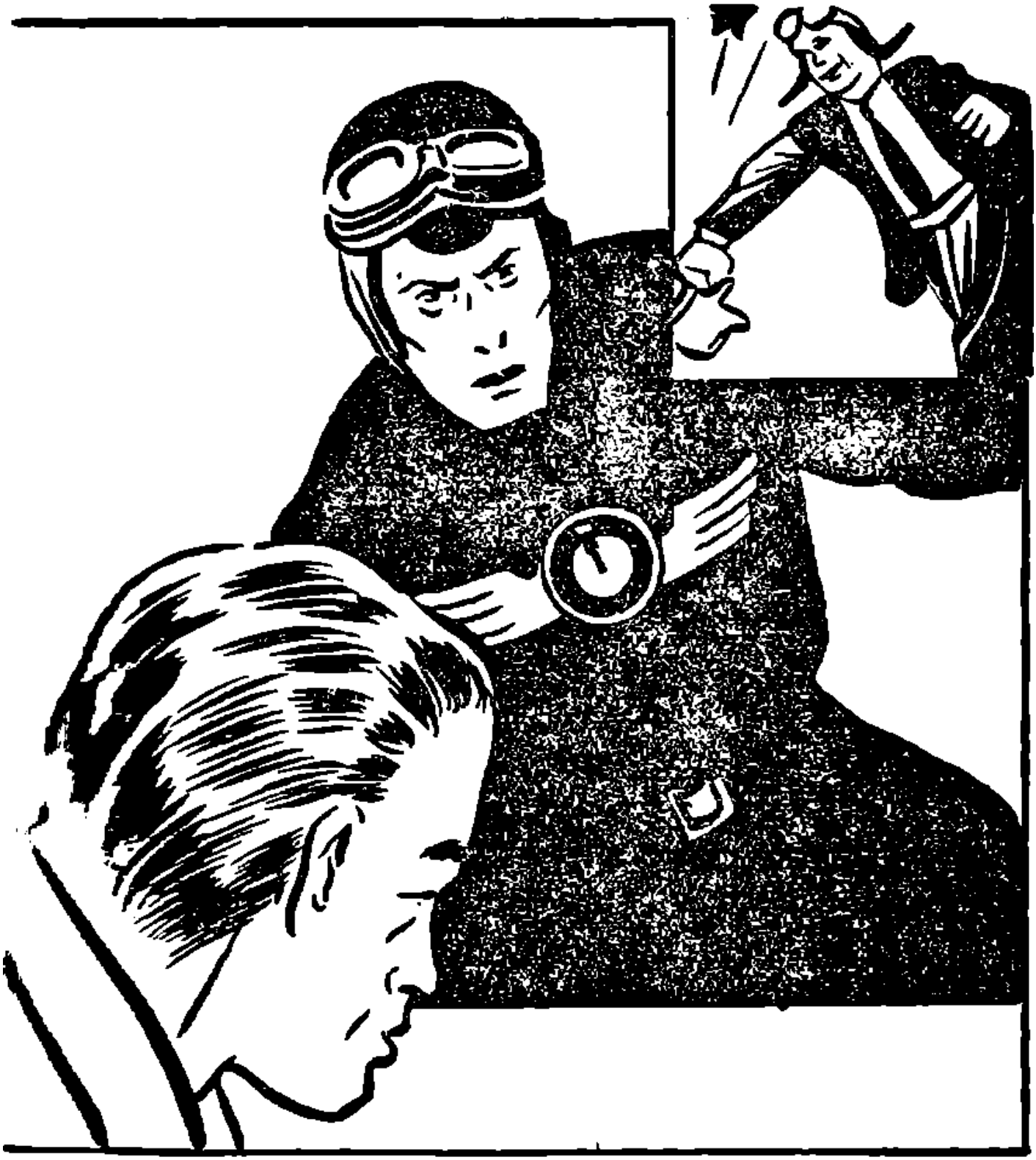
"No, Chuck, no! Don't put your

The Top Opened

hand in there!"

"But why not?"

"Many a man has lost his life reaching into a secret compartment like this," the captain explained. Captain Midnight took his knife out of his pocket and pressed the blade down on the packet. There was a click and a needle sprang from the side of the compartment and struck the steel blade of the knife. "That's a second safety device. If you had put your



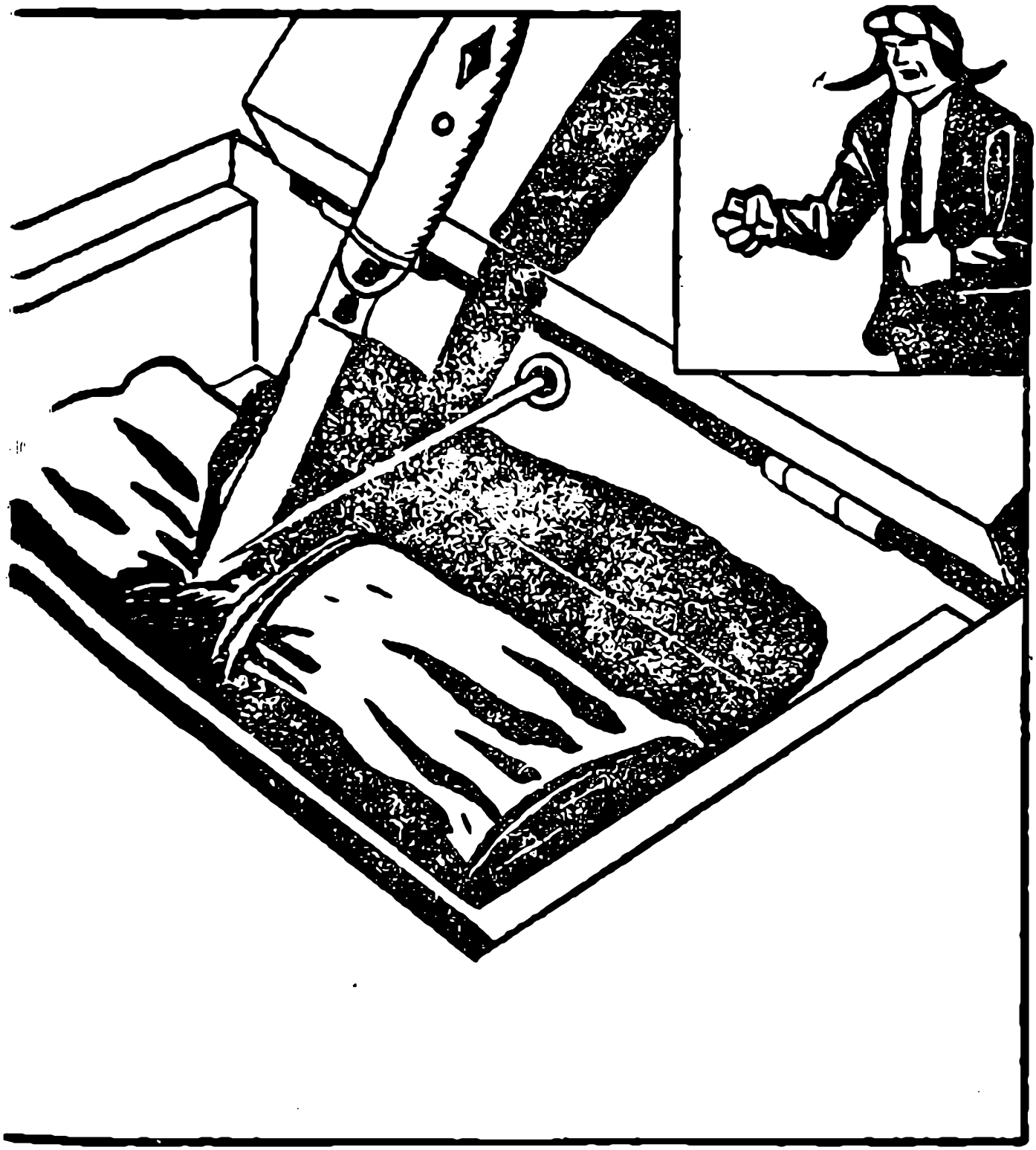
"Don't Put Your Hand in There!"

hand in there you'd be dead by now. That needle undoubtedly is poisoned."

Captain Midnight fished the packet out of the compartment and put it in his inside pocket.

Mudd, who had been searching another part of the house, entered the room with news that a messenger had arrived from Major Sun asking that they return at once to the field.

A few minutes later the Ameri-



A Needle Sprang Out

cans were at the field. Planes were already taking off and Major Sue explained that news had reached him that a large enemy force was flying this way.

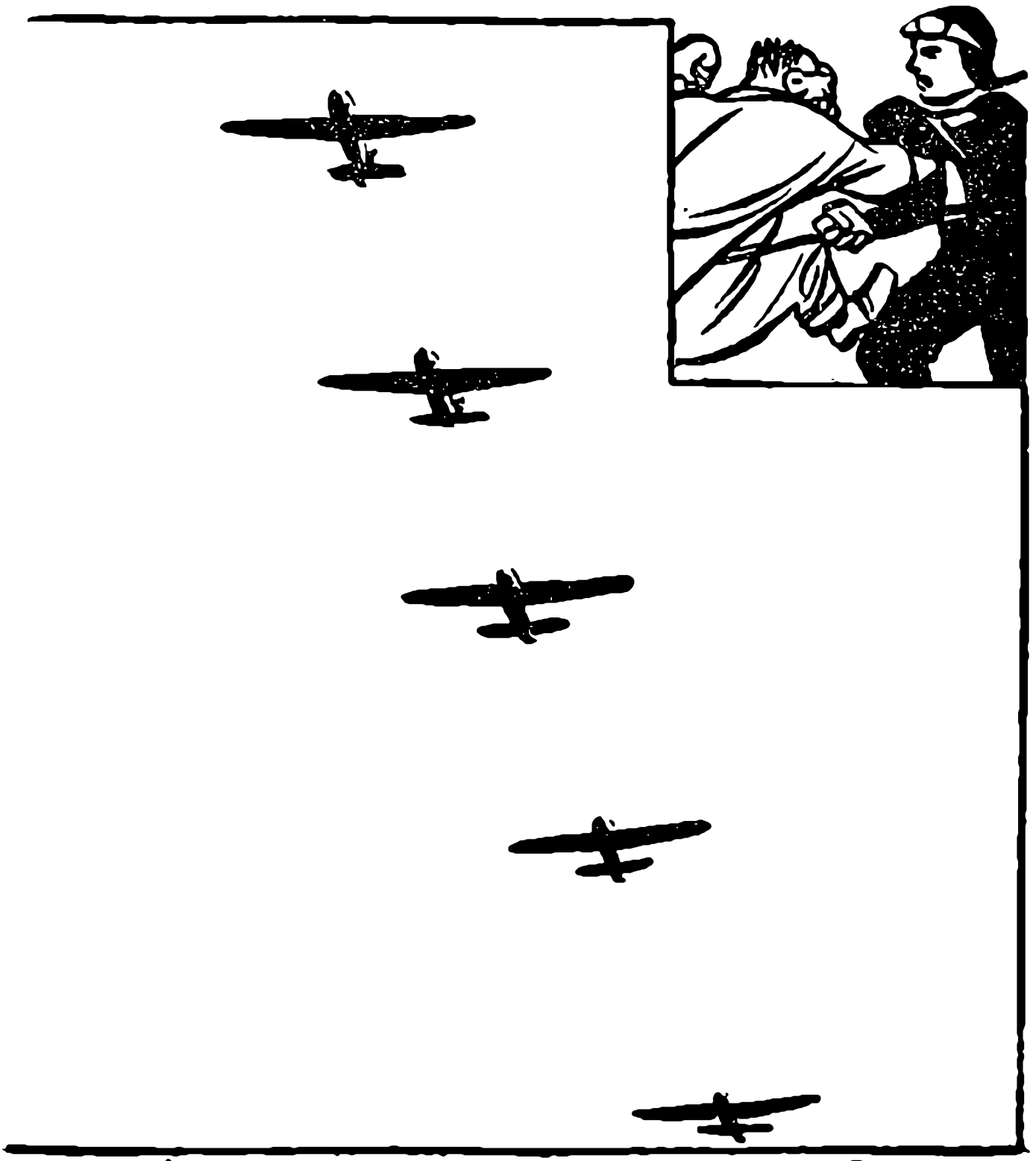
"Major Steel can go to Chungking to convalesce," Captain Midnight said, "but I'm afraid Chuck Joyce, Ikky Mudd and myself will have to go back to Hongkong. Chuck and I found something in The Barracuda's headquarters that must be communicated to our gov-

"We'll Have to Go to Hongkong."

ernment."

"Hongkong?" Major Sun's disappointment showed clearly on his face. "China need pilot bad at Chungking."

"The Secret Squadron has work to do as long as The Barracuda is at large," Captain Midnight said. "I think you'll agree that our dealing with The Barracuda will be invaluable aid to our cause and to the cause of democracy the world over."



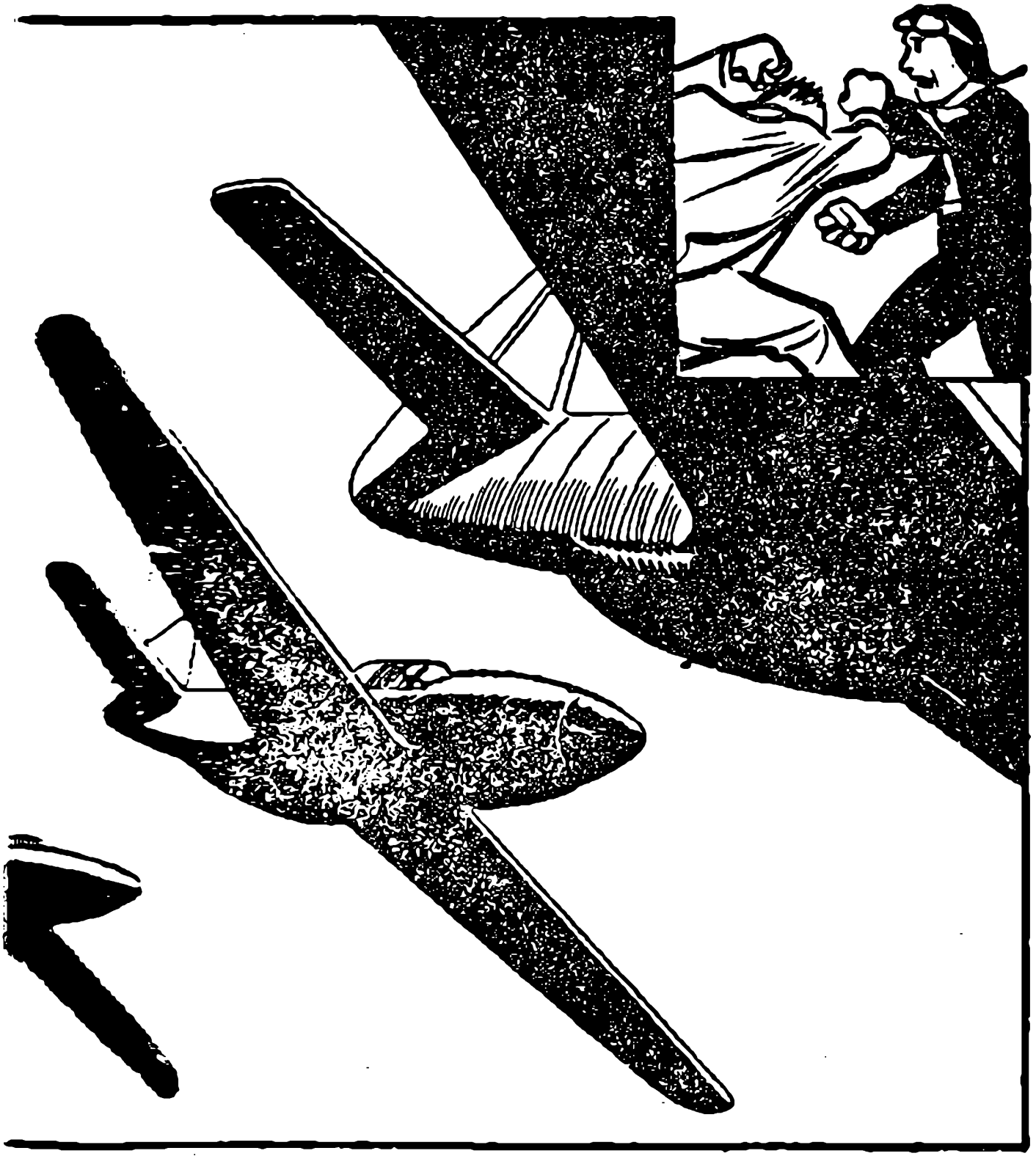
"The Secret Squadron Has Work to Do."

"Yes, Captain," said the Chinese officer with a nod. "Humble Major Sun realize power of Secret Squadron. Perhaps lose no time."

"The Barracuda's plot is to terrorize the entire Far East," Captain Midnight said. "There are things to be done at Hongkong. Singapore, Manila and—Honolulu!"

Major Steel appeared in the doorway of the plane.

"And with all that work to do,



"There Are Many Things to Be Done."

you want to ship me back to Chungking?" he snorted. "I won't hear of it. I'm going with you to Hongkong."

"I'm Going With You."

CHAPTER VI

FORCED LANDING

Ichabod Mudd entertained Chuck and Joyce with a story of his adventures with Captain Midnight after they had bailed from the amphibian plane.

"Some fighter planes caught up with us after we'd been in the air a while and we sure had it hot and heavy," he related. "We gets one of

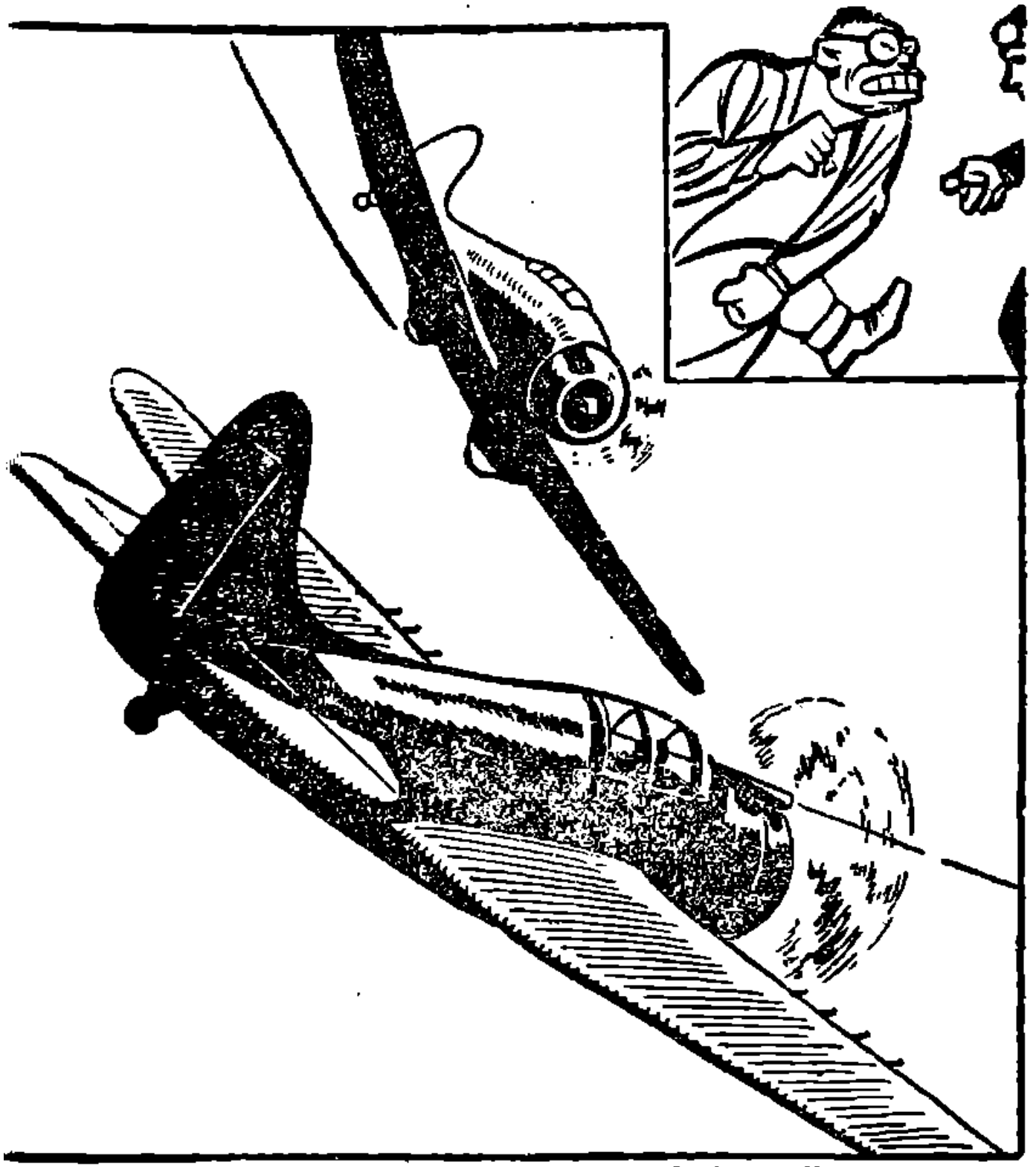
Mudd Entertained Chuck and Joyce

our engines crippled, but we shoo: a couple of 'em down so the res: turn back."

"Were you flying for Chung-king?" Joyce asked.

"I'll say we was! And we had th: one good engine wide open. Bu: that field where we swiped th: bomber radioed a warning and w: kept meetin' more fighters all th: way."

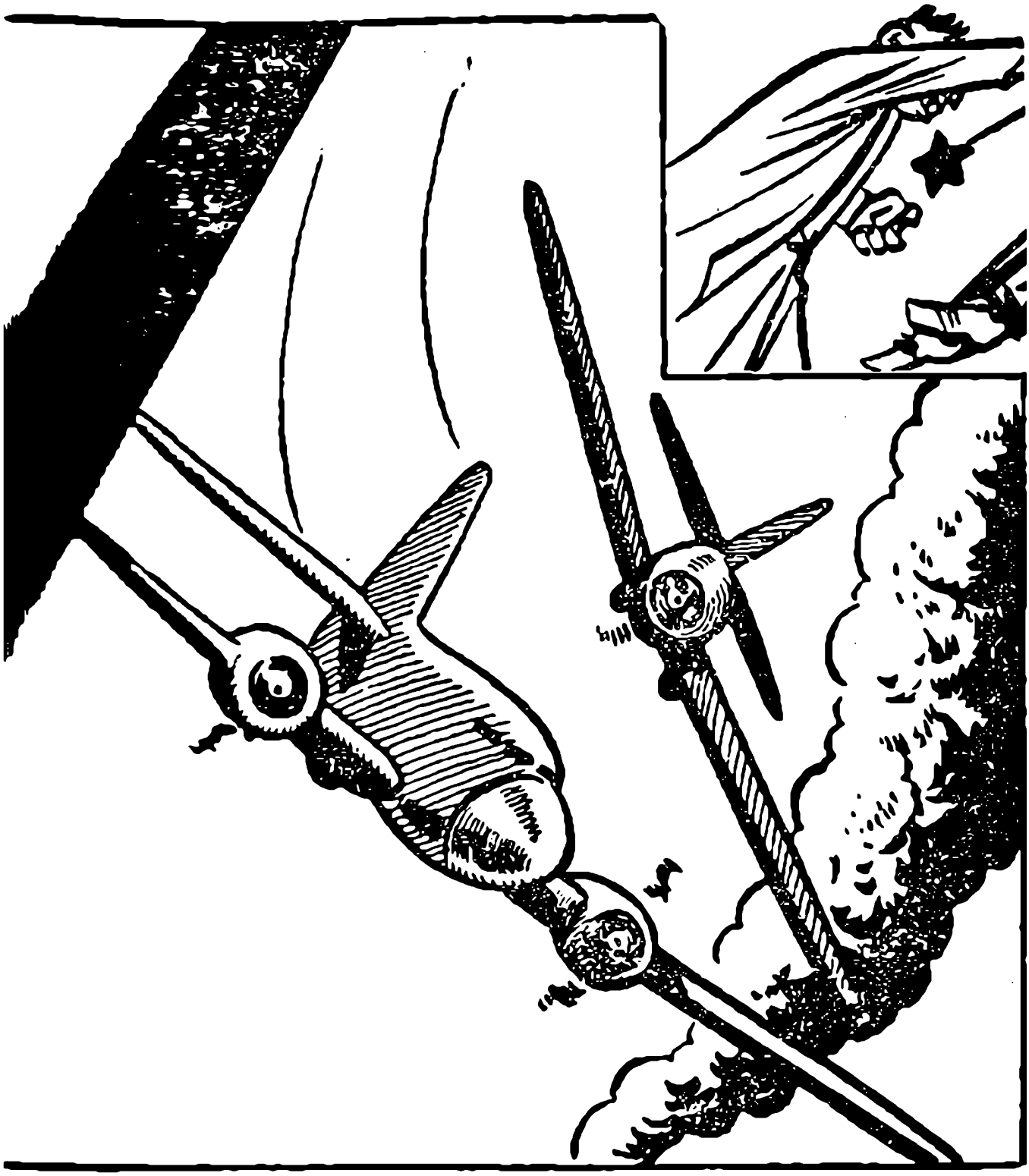
"And you fought them with onl: one engine working?" Chuck aske:



"We Kept Meetin' More Fighters."

in amazement.

"That's what we done! And, believe me, we didn't have no easy time of it. Cap'n Midnight jest sat up in front and kept the nose guns goin' while I sat behind and kept the rear guns blazin'. Cap'n Midnight didn't try to turn one way or the other. He just kept in a straight line for Chungking and we took them fighter planes as they came. I'm tellin' ya somepin'! After awhile they was so many bullet



"We Didn't Have No Easy Time."

holes through the ship that the draft was enough to blow your hat off.

"An' you ain't heard nothin' yet!" Ichabod lifted his hand to his ear. "See that little scratch? I had my head glued to the sights o' my gun and I feel a kind of ticklin' sensation in my ear lobe so I puts up my finger to see what it was. Look at my finger!"

There was another little scratch on the finger.

"See That Little Scratch?"

"They was a regular stream o machine-gun bullets goin' past my head and each one o' them was jus touchin' my ear as it went by so I couldn't move my head for fear the bullets would go through my skull."

"What happened?" Chuck asked laughing at the story.

"This other pilot must have run out of ammo after awhile, 'cause the bullets stopped. Finally we got near Chungking and our plane jes

"I Couldn't Move My Head."

fell to pieces in the air. Cap'n Midnight an' I had strapped parachutes on and all we had to do was to jerk our ripcords."

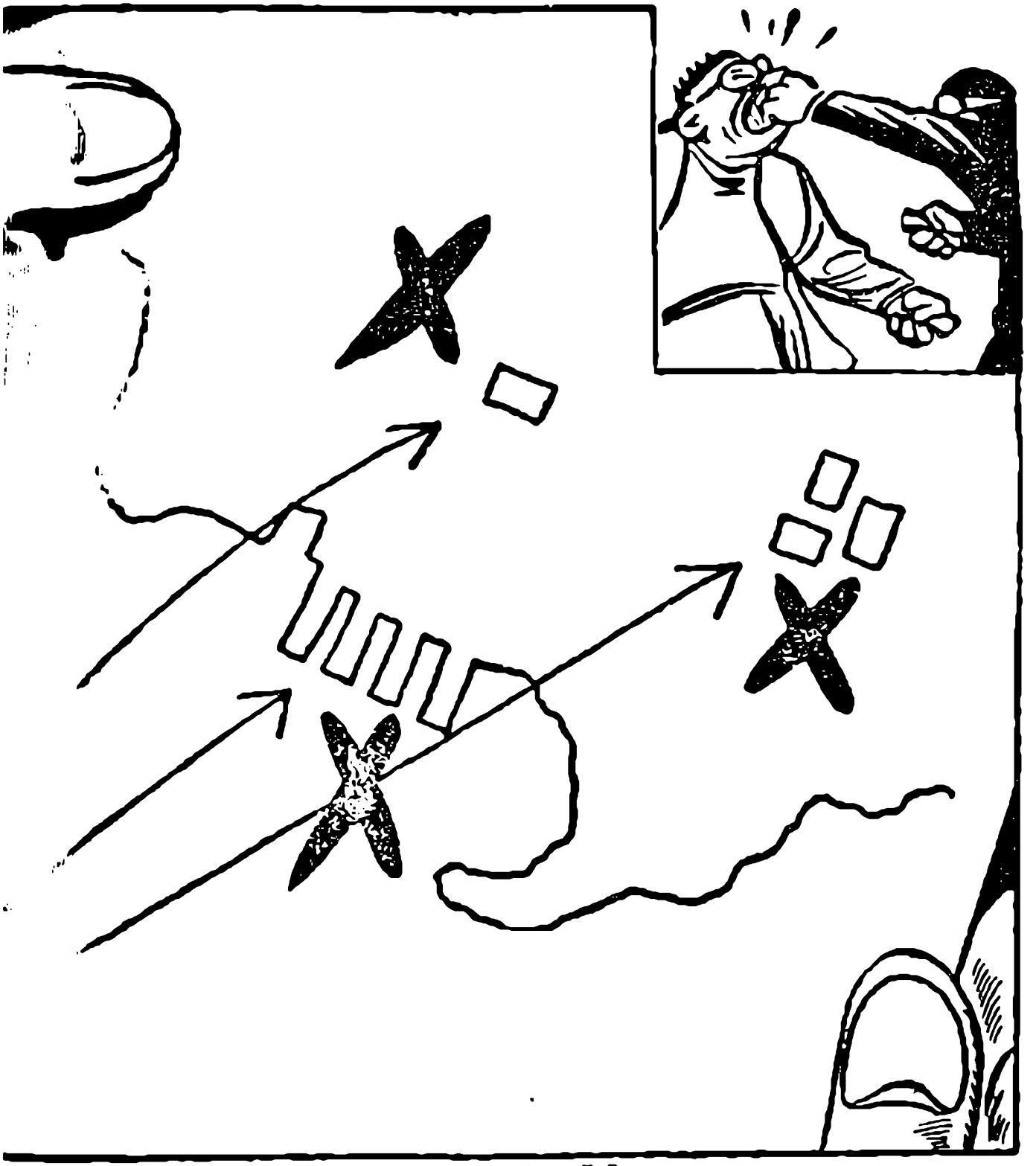
In another part of the plane Major Steel was examining the papers found in The Barracuda's palatial residence. Captain Midnight, at the controls of the plane was watching the Intelligence Officer go through the papers, examining the strange symbols and trying to decode their meaning.

He Examined the Papers

At last the major found one bit of paper that needed no decoding. It was a map. There were no names on the map, but there was a compass and the drawing indicated a harbor. Along the harbor were little squares, apparently representing gun emplacements. Even the docks and wharves were marked on the map.

Puzzled, Major Steel passed the map to Captain Midnight.

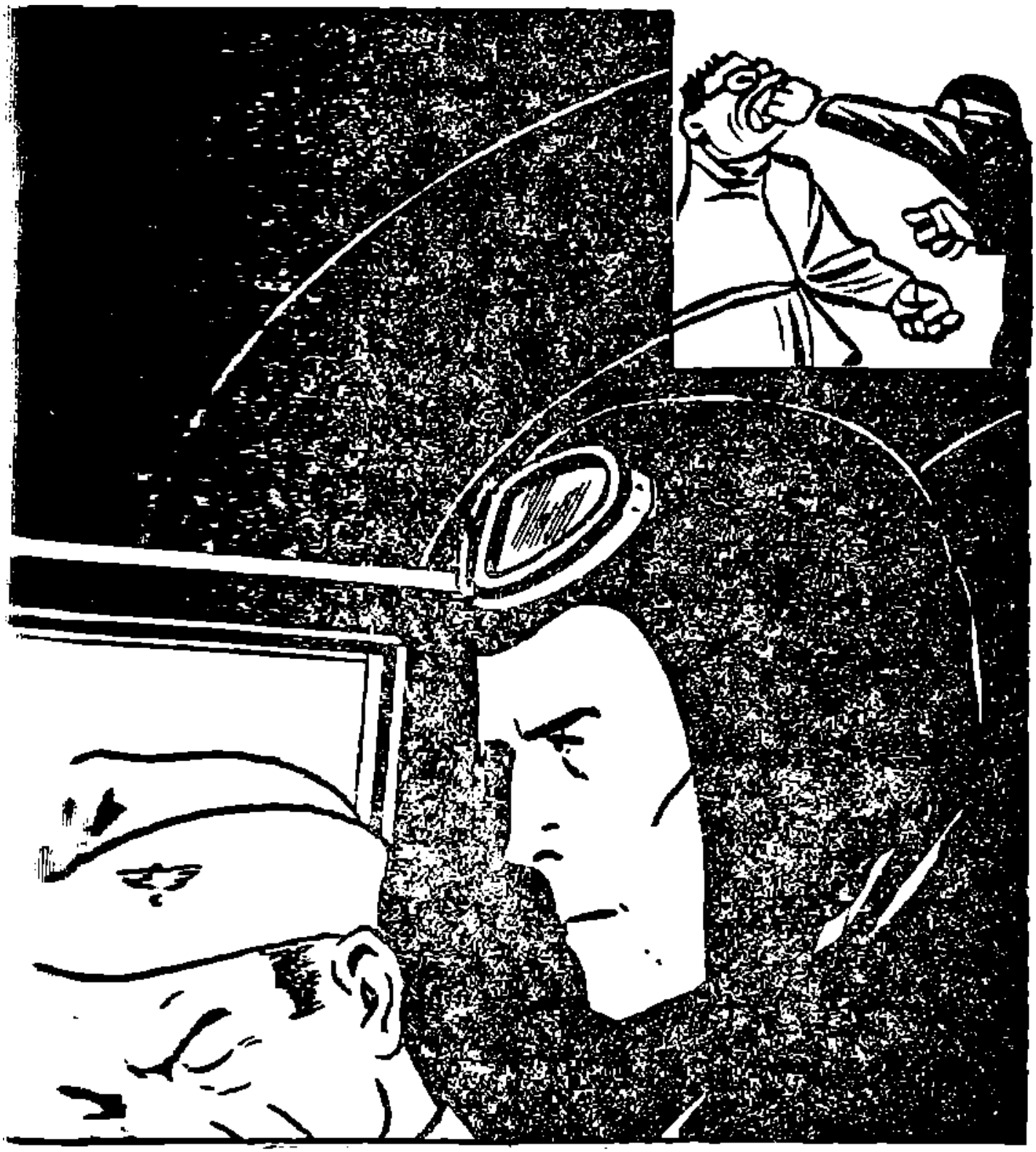
"I know what it is, Major," the



He Found a Map

captain said. "It's a detailed map of the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Honolulu. Very secret naval information!"

The information indicated that the work of The Barracuda was not confined entirely to Asia. Such a map of the most important western fortification of America indicated that his interest extended far out into the Pacific. The Secret Squadron led by Captain Midnight would have to find out just how

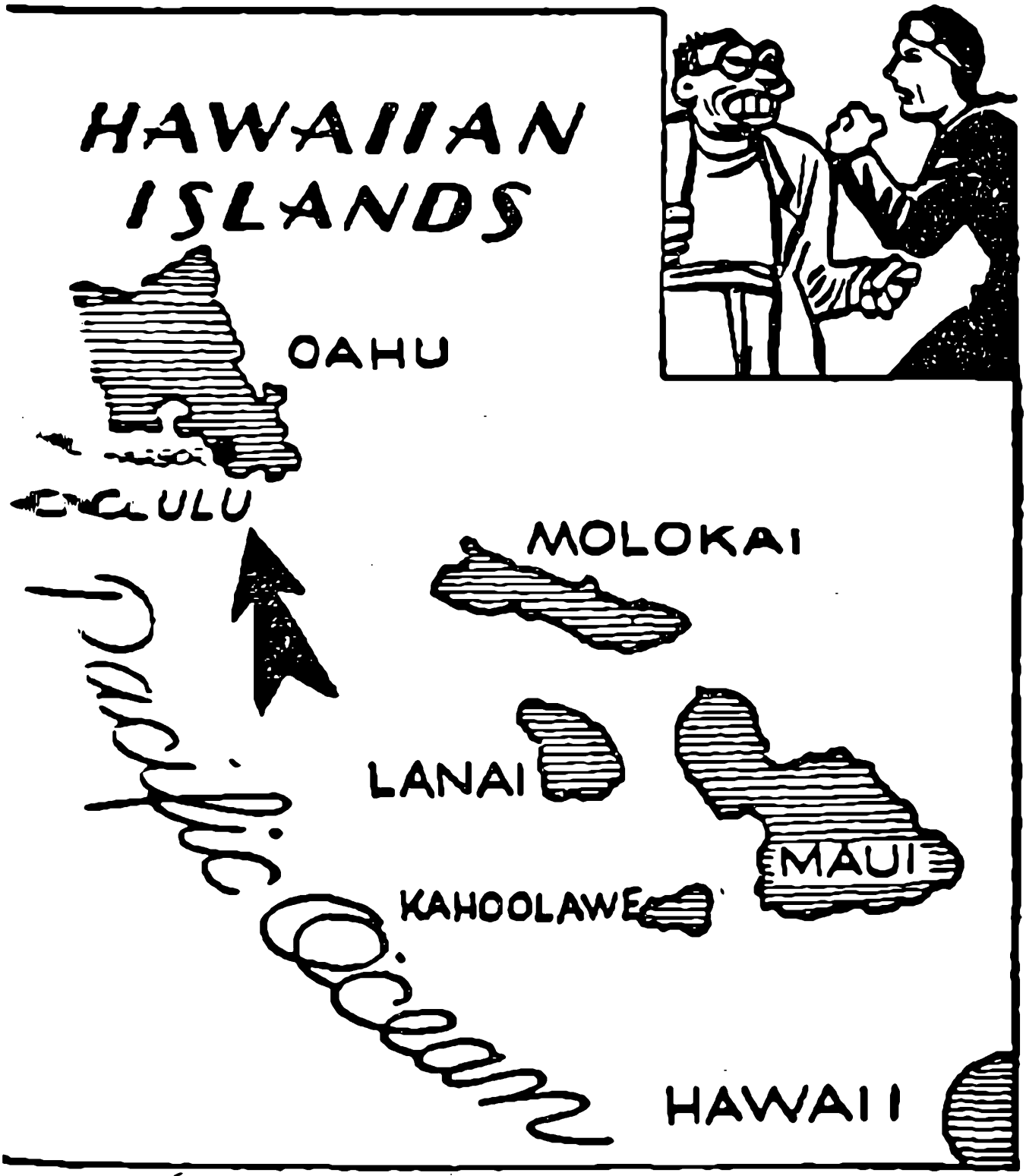


"It's a Map of Pearl Harbor."

much of a menace The Barracuda was going to be. The squadron already had a base in Hawaii.

"You'll have to return to Honolulu as soon as possible," Major Steel decided.

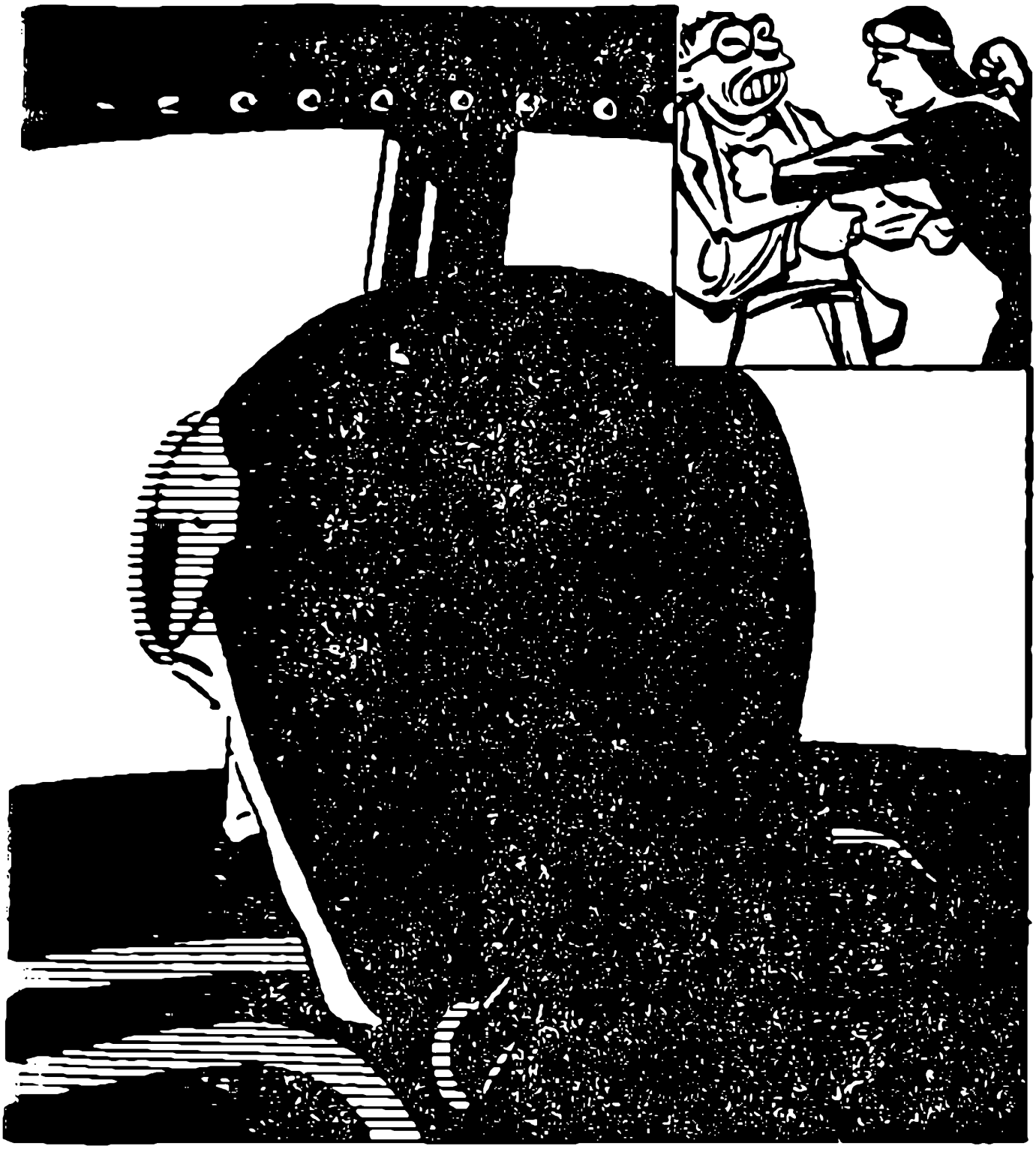
"Right!" Captain Midnight glanced at his fuel gauge. Suddenly he was aware that his gasoline was low. Ahead of him lay great banks of clouds. There was no radio beam and it would be necessary to fly by compass. With plenty



"You'll Have to Return to Honolulu."

of fuel this might not mean much more than a little lost time, but with the fuel supply low there was a chance that those aboard Captain Midnight's craft might be stranded for some time in hostile country.

In the meantime, hundreds of miles away, a giant four-motored plane flew in an easterly direction. This craft was the last word in aeronautical design, equipped with every conceivable kind of scientific



He Glanced at His Fuel Gauge

instrument.

The aircraft was the flying headquarters of the man known as The Barracuda. This evil genius was seated at a giant instrument panel in the luxurious cabin of the huge plane. Near him sat his assistant, Colonel Goto, with earphones clamped to his head. The colonel was receiving a message. The city had been retaken but the Chinese planes and Secret Squadron agents had escaped.

He Flew Eastward

The plane bearing Captain Mid-night had flown straight to the southeast.

The Barracuda was thinking. He had been forced to leave his head-quarters in a hurry. What was left behind had been well hidden and well guarded, yet what if somehow Captain Midnight had discovered the contents of the little teakwood table?

The thoughts were interrupted by Colonel Goto who relayed the in-

The Barracuda Was Thinking

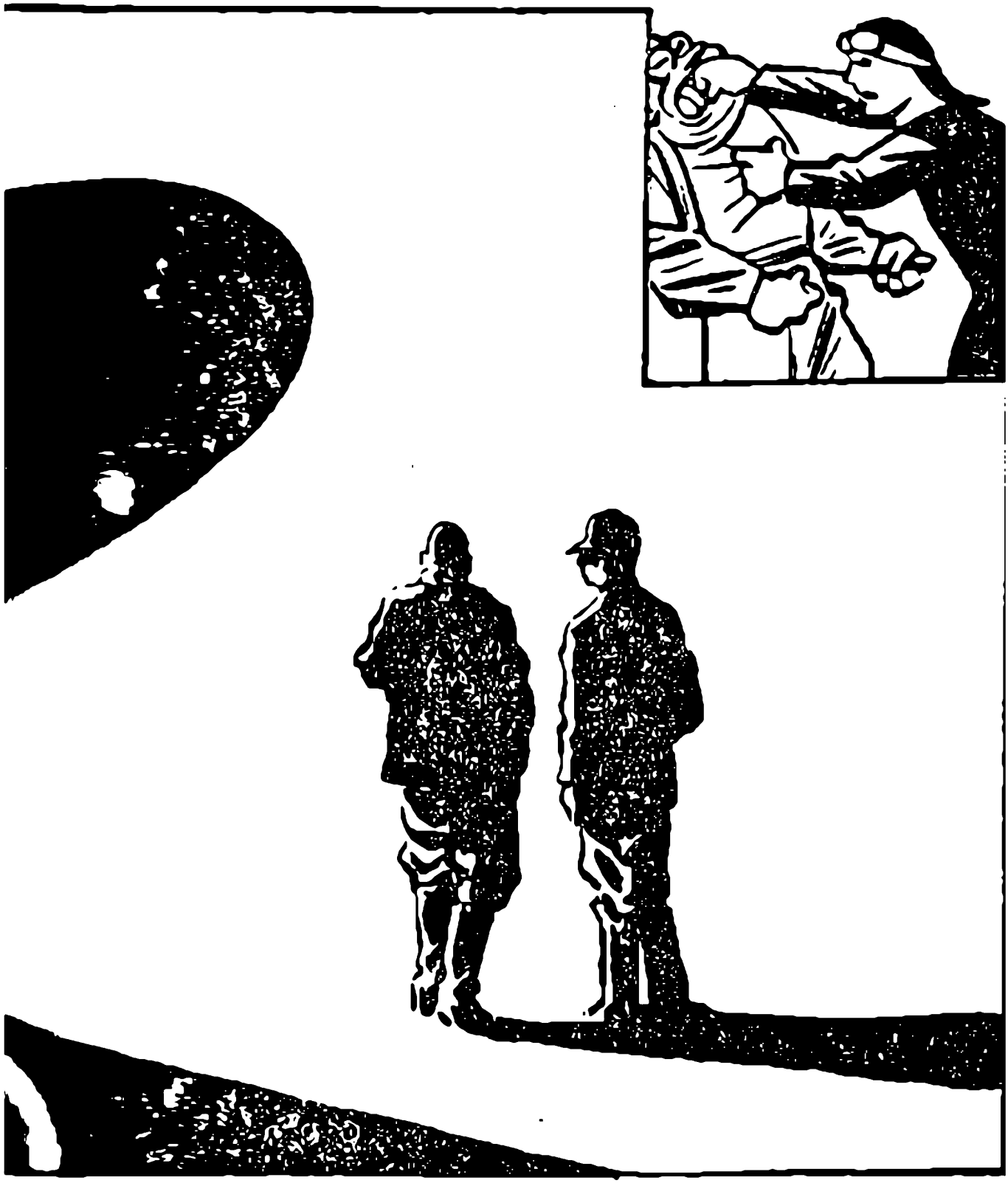
formation he had received from the troops.

"Good!" The Barracuda said nodding. "It was a question between Chungking and Hongkong and Captain Midnight has chosen Hongkong. Very well. We'll meet them on their own ground."

The Barracuda picked up a radio microphone.

"HQ calling X-5-1! HQ calling X-5-1!" he spoke.

X-5-1 answered the call within a



"We'll Meet Them on Their Own Ground."

few seconds.

"Chinese plane bearing Ma[illegible] Steel, Captain Midnight and th[illegible] Secret Squadron agents is fly[illegible] toward Hongkong. They must [illegible] leave Hongkong alive. Call in eve[illegible] available man!" The Barracu[illegible] spoke.

The renegade white man smi[illegible] and directed Colonel Goto to set [illegible] plane's course for a base on [illegible] coast above Hongkong.

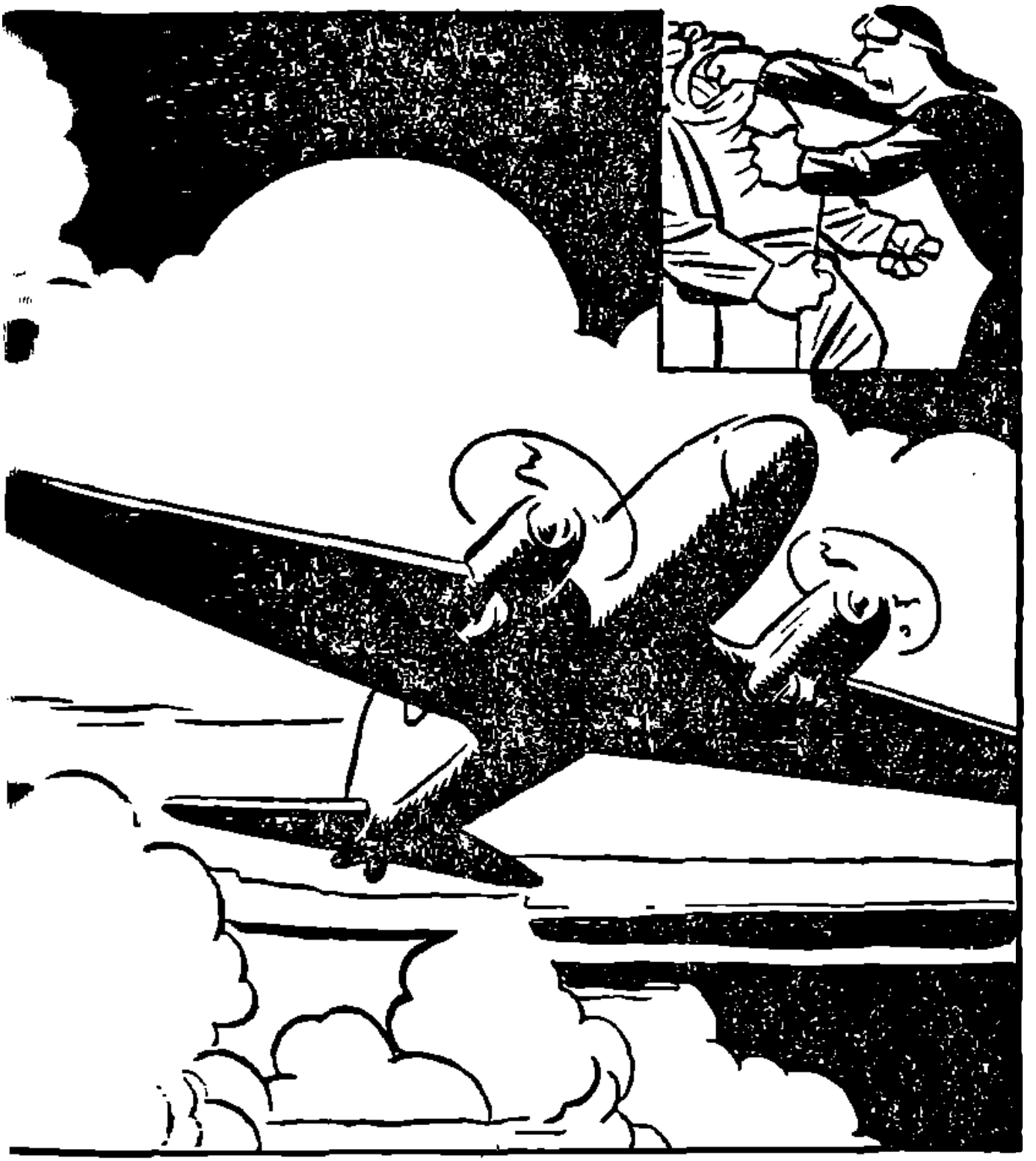
Agents along the route to [illegible]

"They Must Not Leave Alive."

taken by Captain Midnight would soon be warned and they would watch the skies for the American flier.

At that moment the Chinese plane bearing the Americans was riding rough air through a bank of clouds. Captain Midnight knew that any hope of reaching Hongkong on the dwindling fuel supply was gone by now.

Captain Midnight knew that the plane would have to land. The



'They Rode Through Heavy Clouds

country below was rough, but there was a flat valley farther on. According to the map, there was a large city and a flying field on the other side of these low-lying mountains. The captain confided his plan to Major Steel.

"Great day!" the major exclaimed. "This country below us isn't in the hands of the Chinese government!"

"It is right on the borderline. It may be and—again—it may not

The Country Below Was Rough

Captain Midnight said. "Whether it is or isn't it's our best chance. We have to land."

The country flattened out as the plane crossed the mountains. The captain nosed the plane down. He looked at his watch. It was five-thirty in the morning. The first trace of dawn was beginning to climb out of the east.

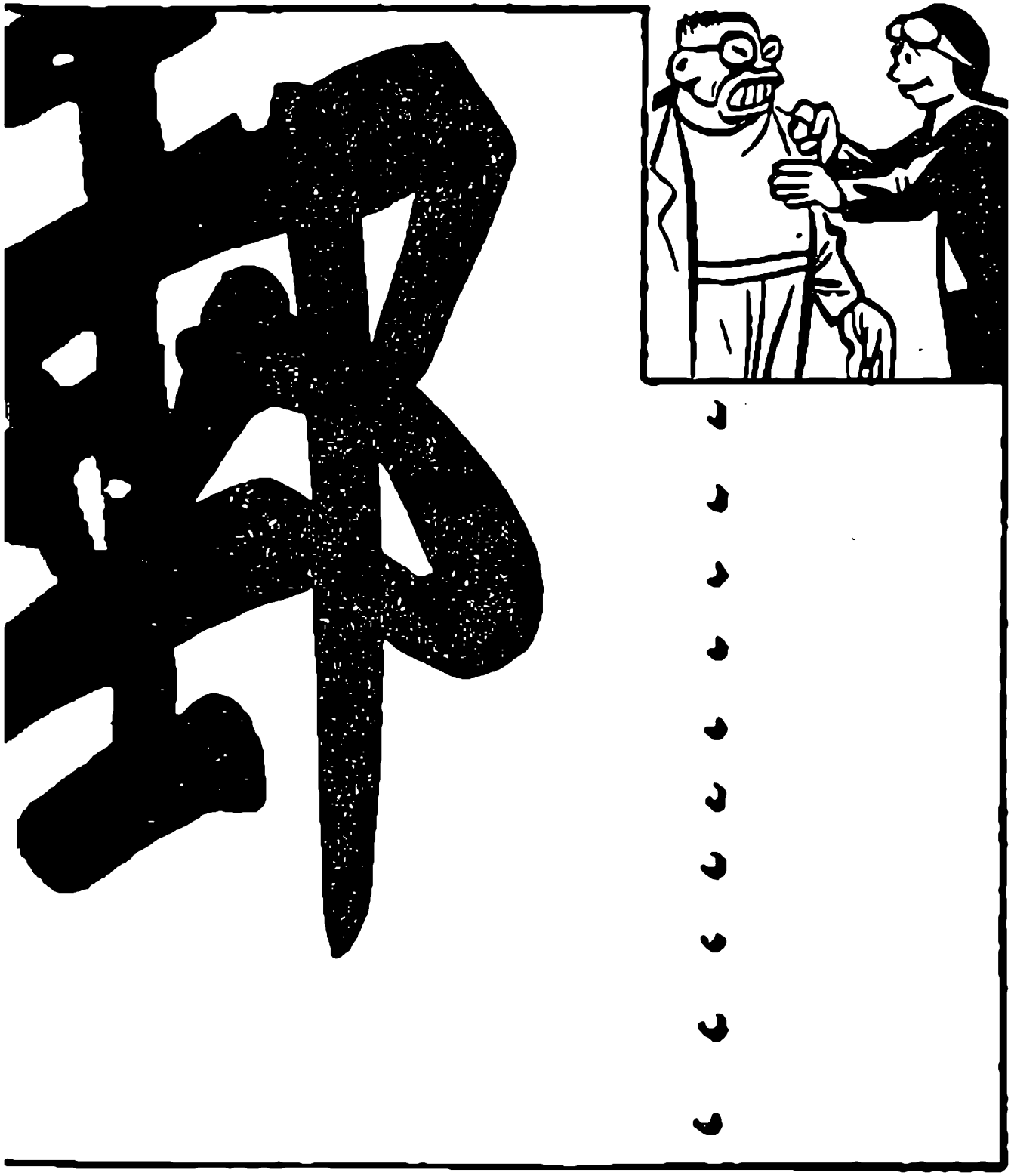
"There's the city!" the major said, pointing to the right.

The captain saw the city and

"We Have to Land."

turned toward it. His eyes spotted a level stretch that looked like an airport. The next question was would the plane find friends or foes on the ground?

There was one way to find out. The plane in which the Americans were riding bore Chinese markings. If the ship landed without opposition, the government at Chungking held the city. If guns opened up as soon as the plane got within range—the place was



'The Plane Bore Chinese Markings

held by China's enemies.

"If we get shot at we wo land," Captain Midnight sa "We'll fly west and keep going u til our gas gives out."

"Righto!" the major nodded. was a desperate venture. He gr ped the arms of his seat and he on firmly.

As the plane approached the a field Captain Midnight noted th not a single plane was visible a there were no signs of life. Th

"If We're Shot at, We Won't Land."

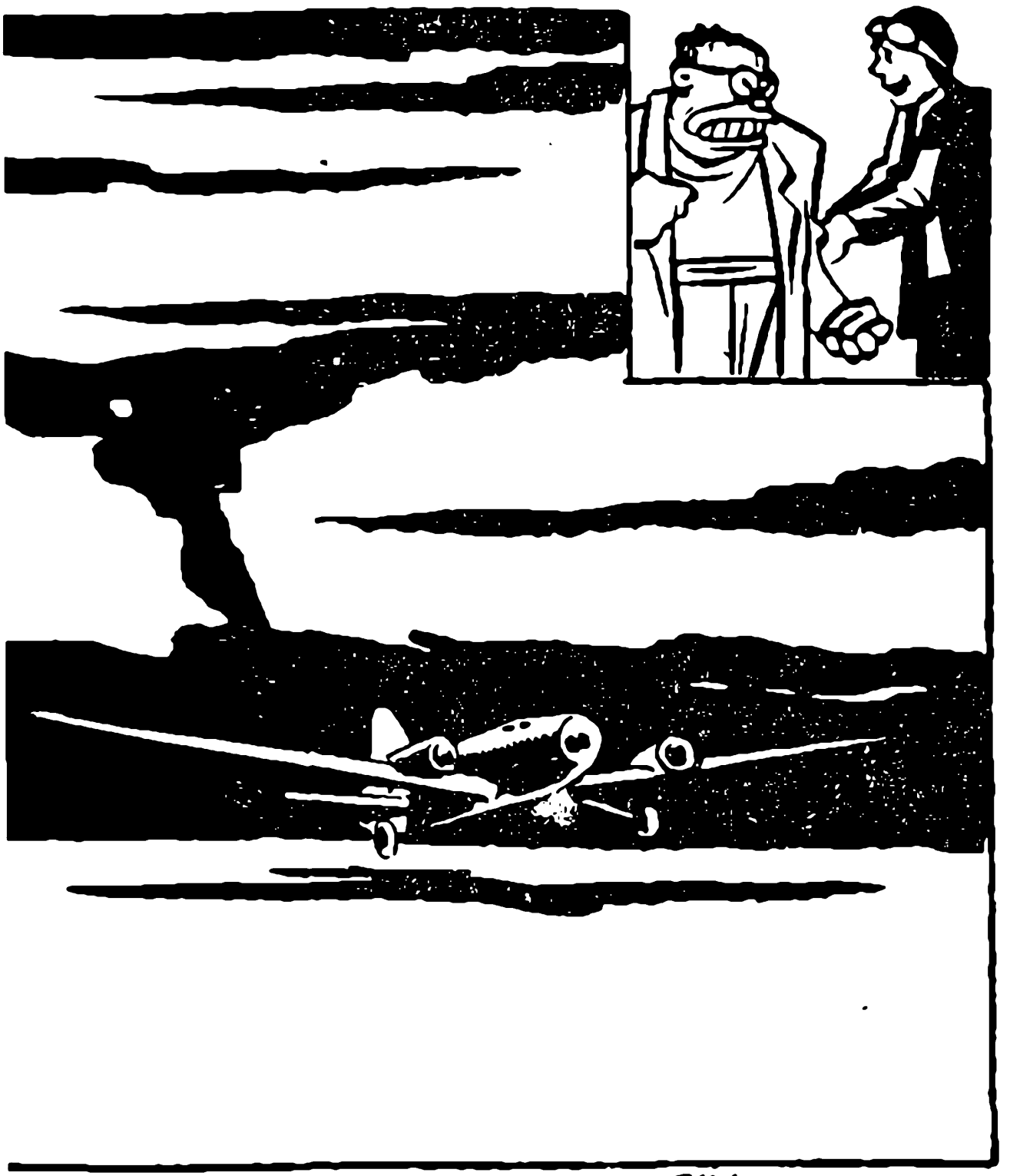
Captain Midnight saw the reas
The field was pitted with bo
craters!

There was room between
craters for a precarious landi
and the captain banked. Ma
Steel rose and shouted a warni
to those in the rear of the cont
cockpit. Chuck and Mudd manne
the rear guns and Joyce buckle
her safety belt.

Captain Midnight throttled t
plane into a power glide.

There Was No Sign of Life

Tensely they waited for a sud-
den bark of machine guns that
would signal that the city was taken
by hostile forces.



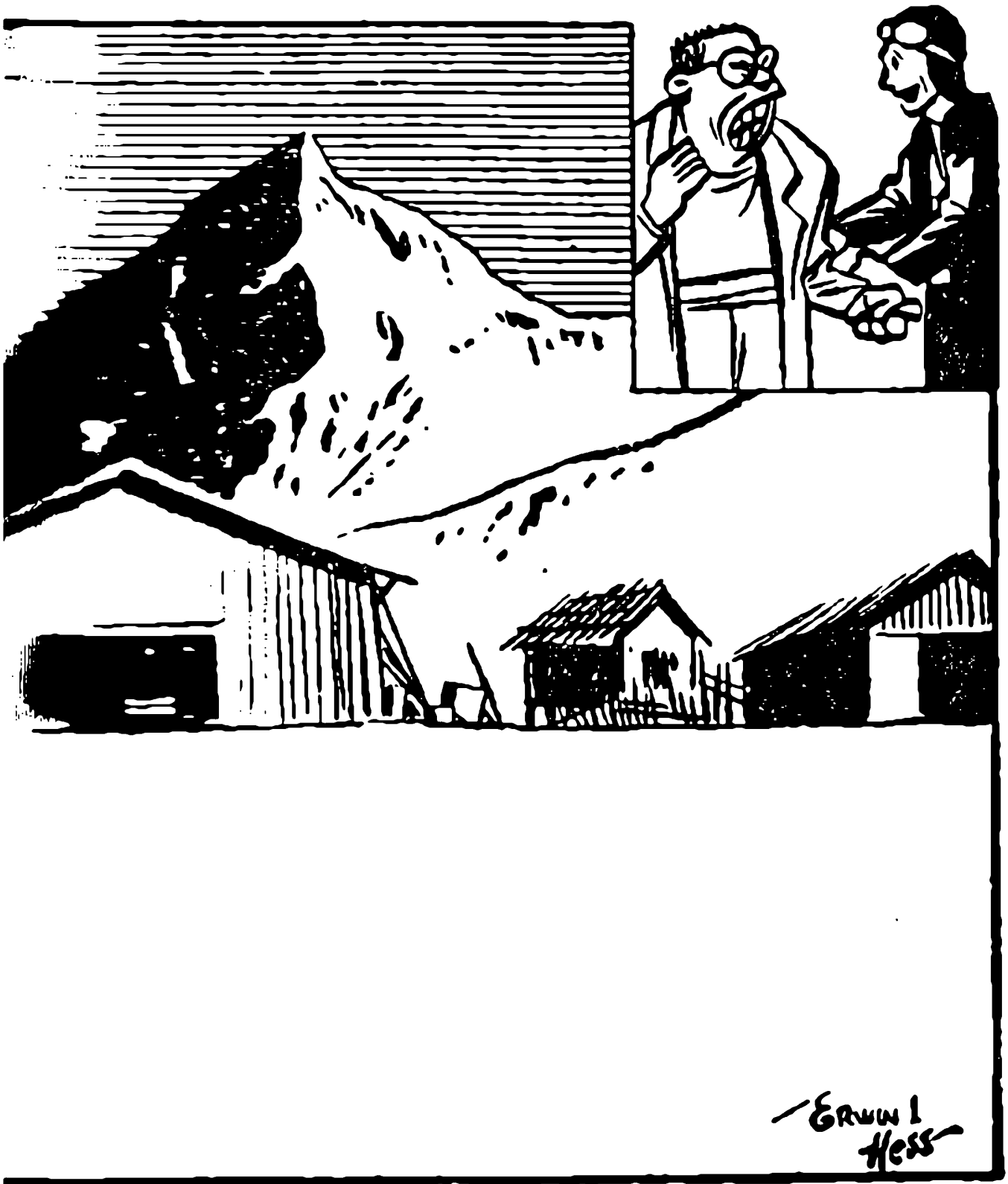
He Put the Plane into a Glide

CHAPTER VII

BOMBED

The plane glided lower toward the pock-marked landing field. The area seemed completely deserted.

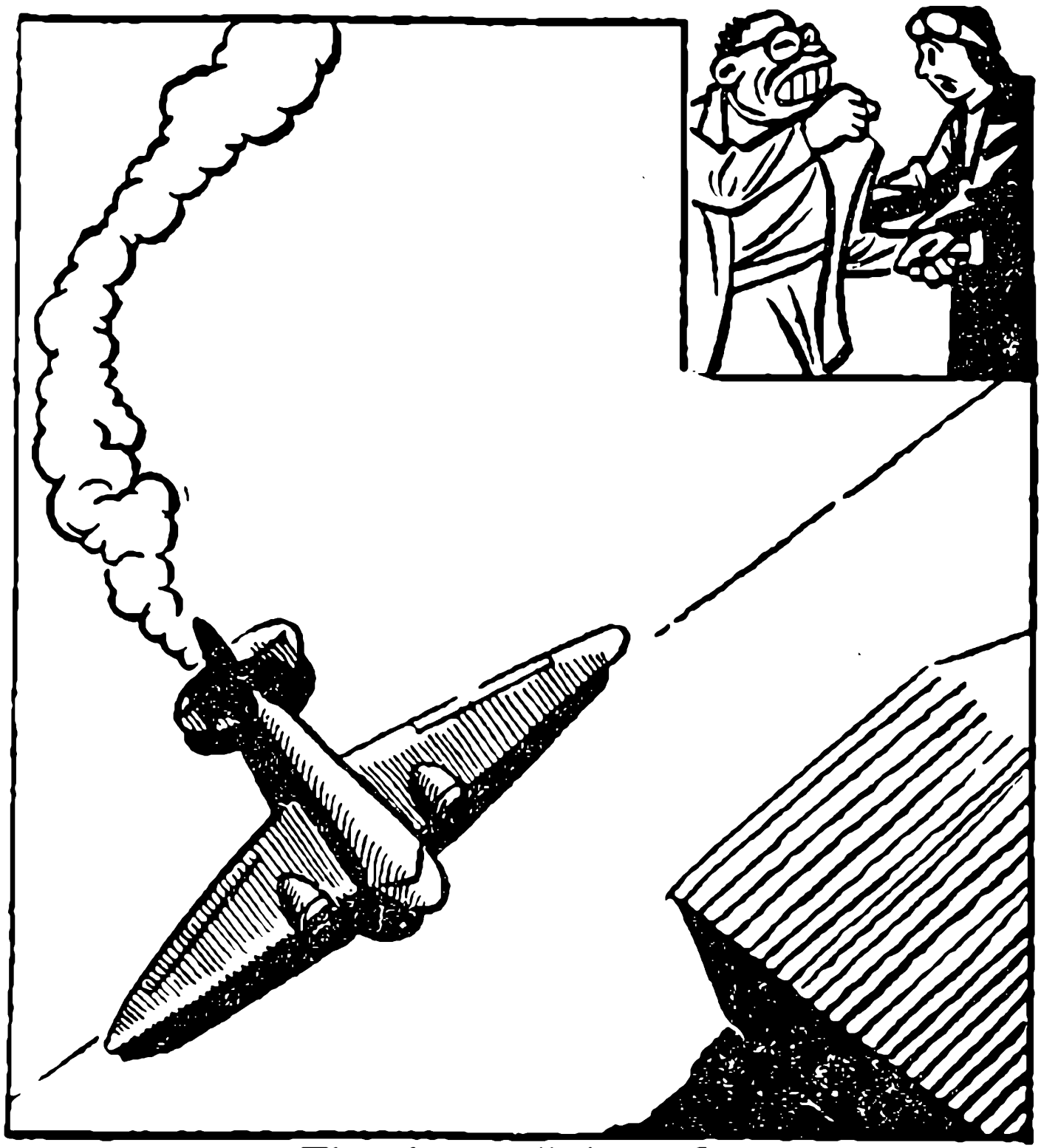
Captain Midnight headed for the only place possible for a landing. He scanned the field and the hangars, making sure he was not running into a trap. He still feared a hidden machine-gun nest. Ahead a



The Area Seemed Deserted!

the ship was a clump of trees that would prevent a straight-ahead take-off after the landing. It would be necessary for Captain Midnight to turn the plane around. Luckily there was no wind, so he would be able to take off in the opposite direction.

The wheels touched the ground and the plane rolled to a stop just a short distance in front of a bomb crater. Captain Midnight turned the plane around and taxied slowly



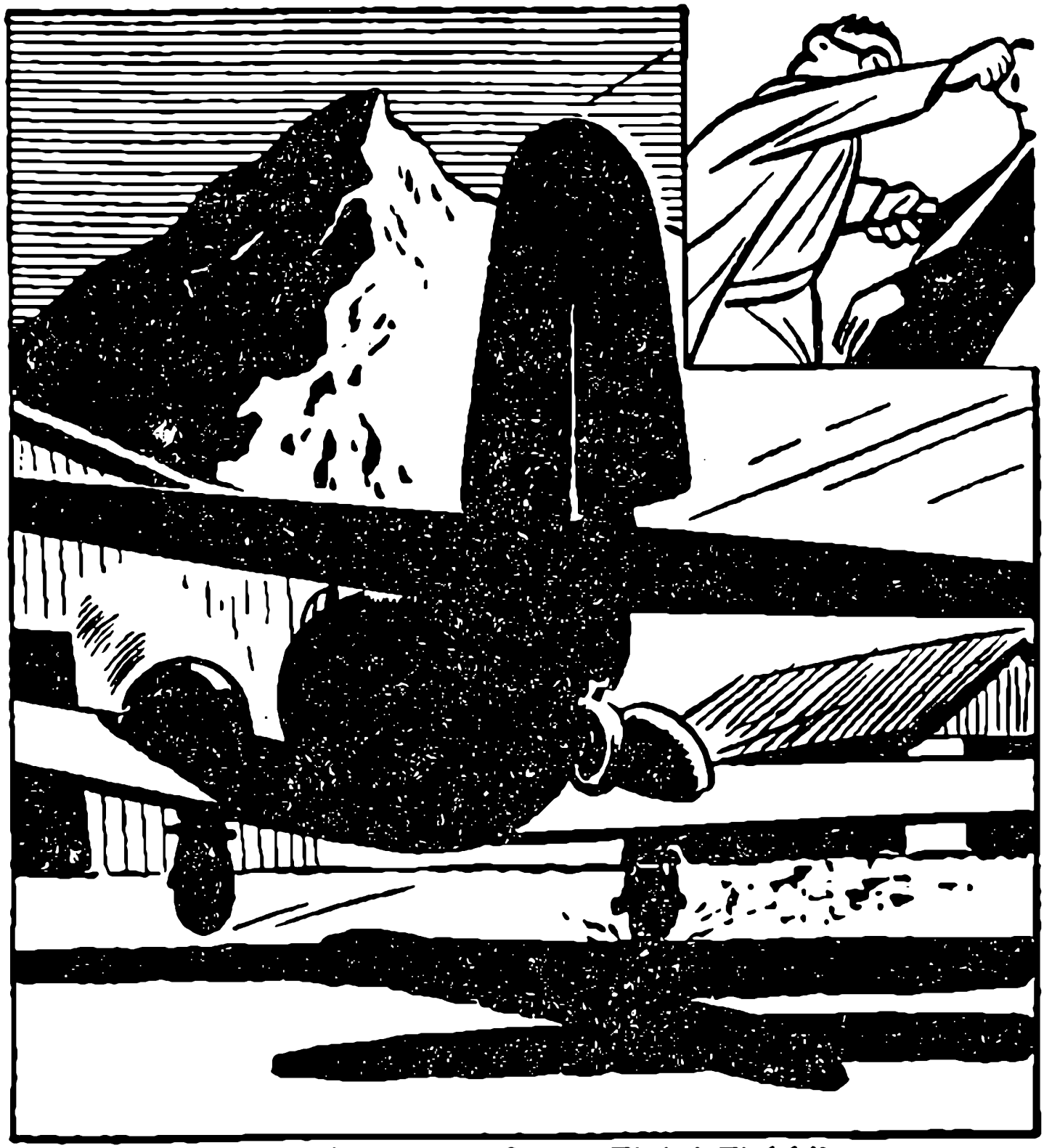
The Plane Rolled to a Stop

toward the first hangar, still searching for signs of life and hoping that the life would not be hostile.

The hangar, like the airfield, was deserted.

"It looks like a GHOST flyin' field," came Ichabod Mudd's comment over the communications speaker.

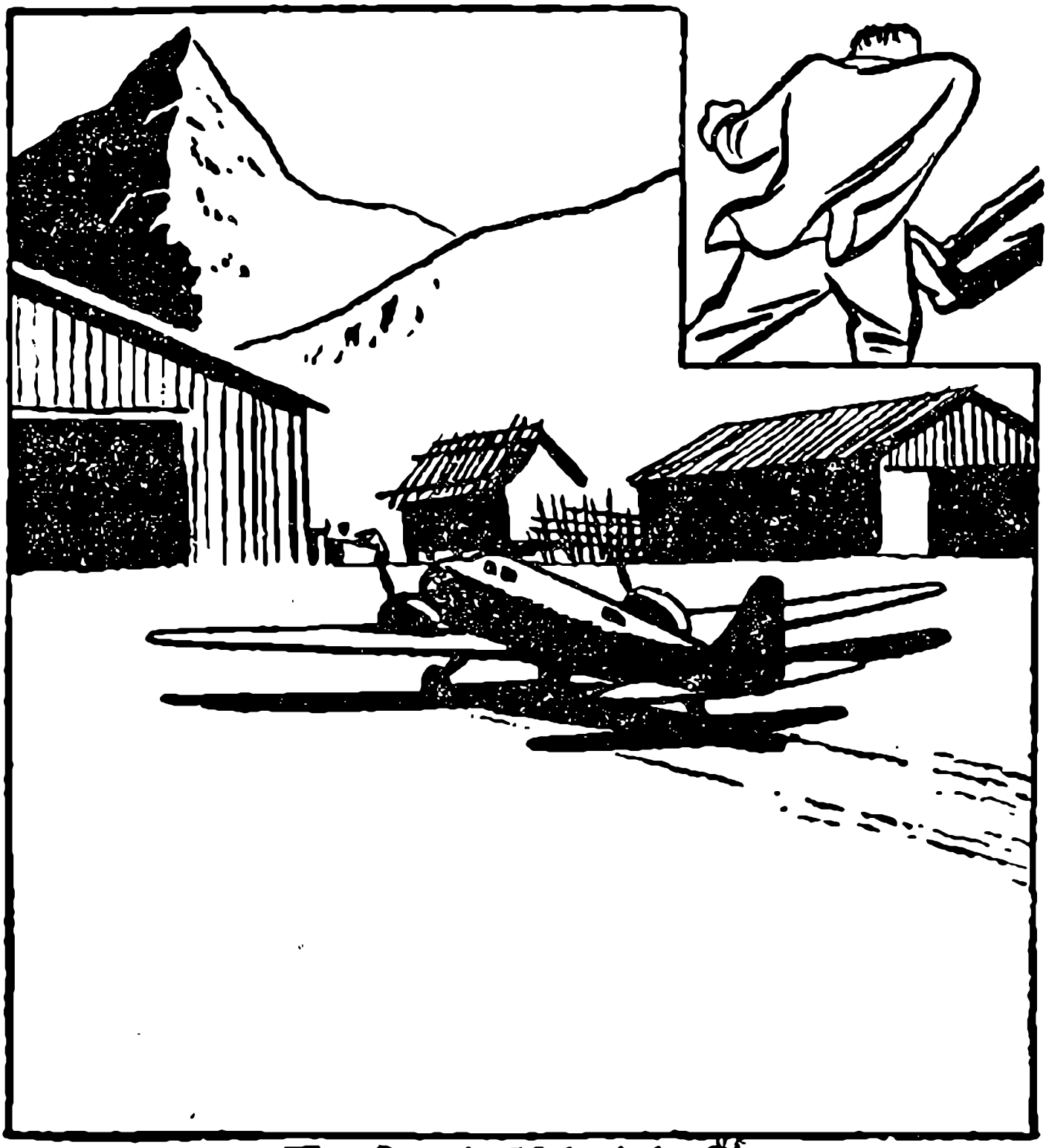
Captain Midnight halted the plane. The rest of the investigation would have to be done on the



"Looks Like a Ghost Flyin' Field."

ground.

With the small group assembled in the cockpit, Captain Midnight tersely explained the situation. Major Steel was to remain in the plane, with the engines running, ready to give an alarm with a short burst of the motor if he saw anything the others missed. The rest were to investigate the hangars and search for gasoline. All were armed with pistols which Captain Midnight found in a locker.



The Captain Halted the Plane

Stealthily the group left the plane. They found disordered wreckage strewn about the hangars. There were parts of engines and many boxes, but no tools or gasoline.

To Captain Midnight there was an obvious solution: the field had been bombed and all of the Chinese planes were flown to another field and the tools and most of the parts moved by truck. This meant that the invader was uncomfortably

There Was Disordered Wreckage

close. It was urgent that fuel be found at once so the Americans could take off as soon as the weather broke.

As Captain Midnight discussed the problem with Chuck, Joyce and Mudd, the latter halted suddenly in his tracks outside one of the hangars. He stared at an approaching figure, dressed in a long robe, wearing a tight-fitting skull cap.

"He looks like a Chinese gentleman of the old school!" Chuck ob-

A Figure Approached

served.

"Surely he won't be able to talk English," Joyce declared.

"He won't have to," Mudd said. "I've been studying Chinese." He patted the little book he carried in his pocket.

"How do you do?" Captain Midnight said, addressing the Chinaman.

"Ho la!" came the reply.

"Talk to him, Ikky," Chuck urged.

"You—Savvy—Gong—Tong—Wa?"

The mechanic began falteringly: "You—savvy—gong—tong—wa?"

The Chinaman slowly shook his head. Ichabod Mudd repeated his question.

"No savvy," said the Chinaman. "Please talkee Amellican."

Chuck and Joyce burst into involuntary laughter.

"Talkee all same like Chicago," urged the Chinaman. "Like Michigan Avenue."

"Why, you must have lived in

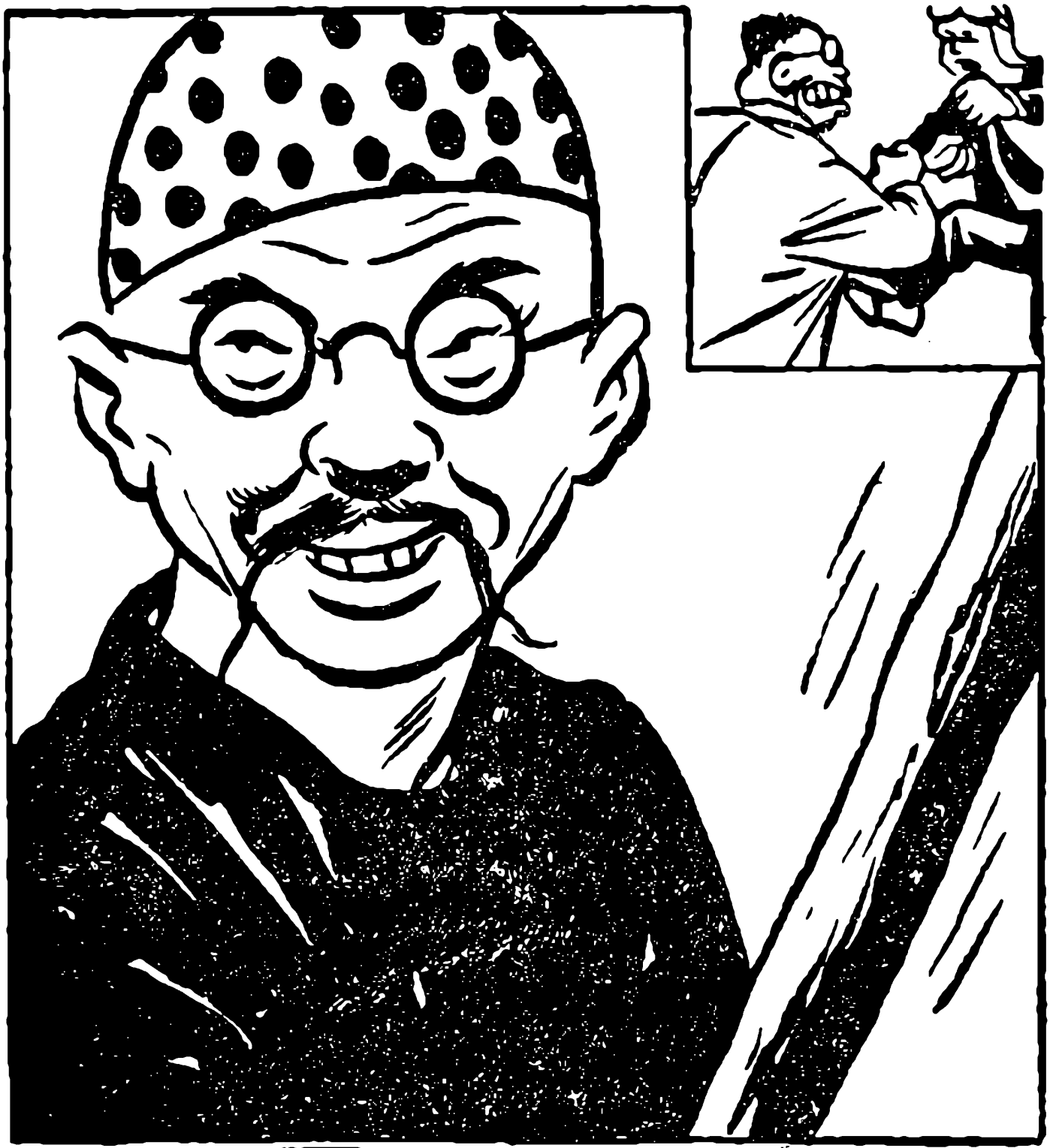
"Please Talkee Amellican."

Chicago!" Chuck said.

"Sure! Sure! Have laundly shop north side. Go see Cubs play Ligley Field."

"Well, clean my carbon! This baby's been to see a ball game at Wrigley Field and I've never been there myself!"

"How much did you pay for that book you bought on how to learn to speak Chinese in ten easy lessons?" Captain Midnight asked his mechanic.

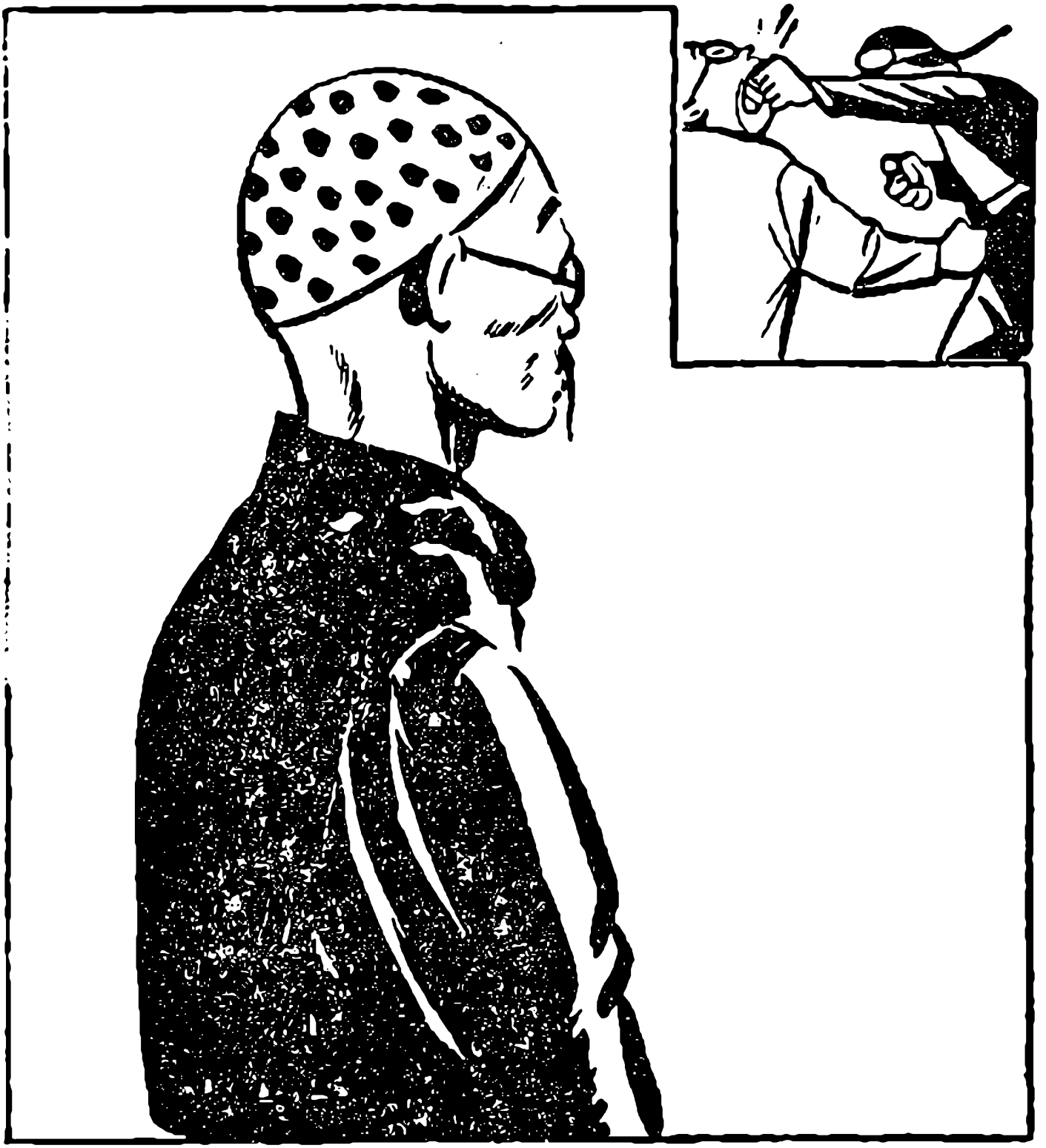


"See Cubs Play Ligley Field."

"Only a couple of bucks," Mudd said sheepishly.

"You spendee two dollol buy book learn speakee Chinese?" the Chinaman asked. "Can learn speak Chinese ten thousand hard lesson —maybe! Some cold morning use book make fire. Keep warm."

Captain Midnight asked the Oriental his name. It was Ling. But Ling was unable to help the Americans obtain fuel. Soon, Ling said, the invader would march into the



His Name Was Ling

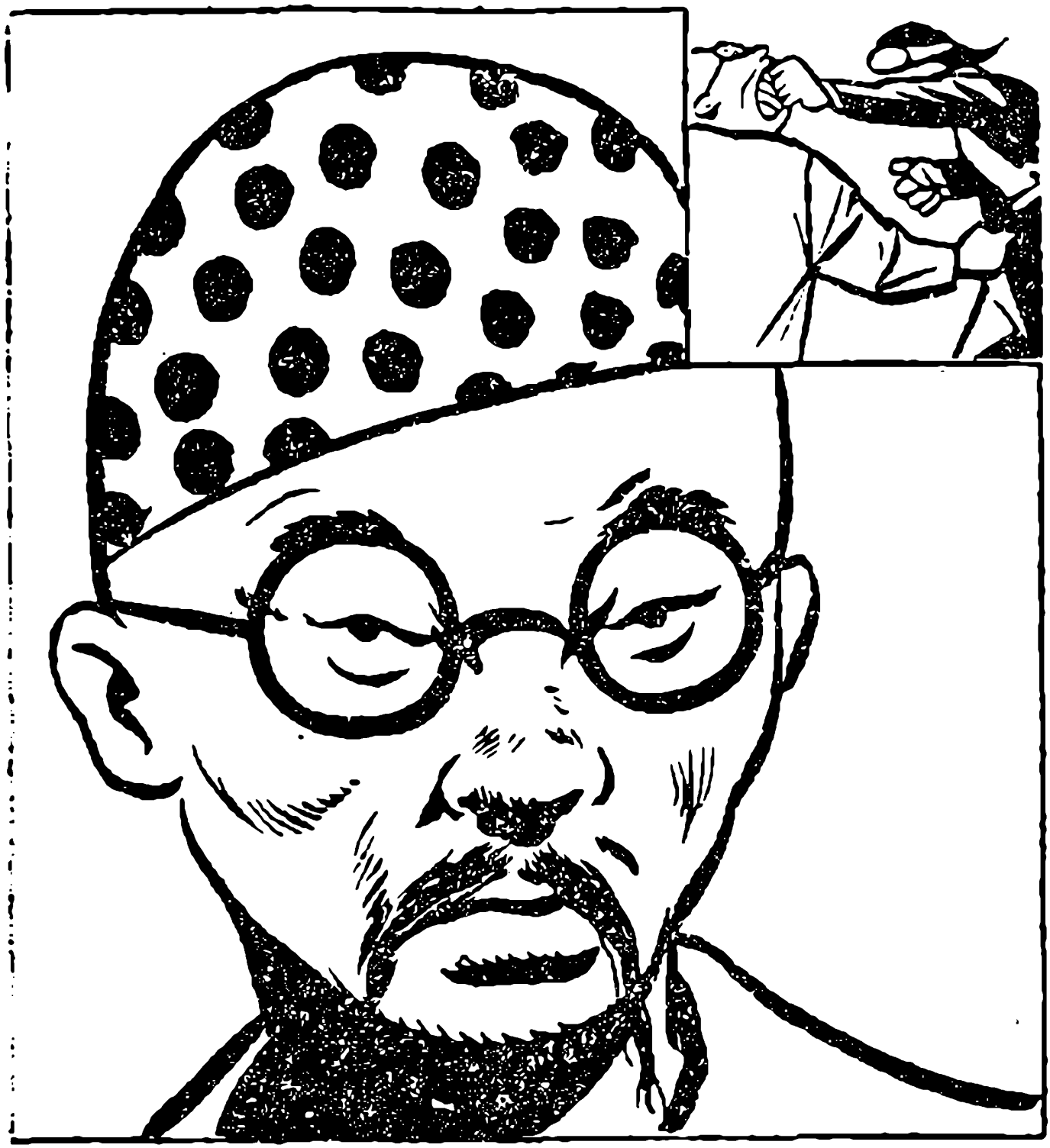
city.

"Maybe one, maybe two day, maybe only few hour."

"Think, Mr. Ling, isn't there some gasoline around somewhere?"

"Have fiend pilot fly Chinese plane. All China plane fill up with gas. Think all gone. Maybe get automobill gas in city. But autombill gas no good for airplane."

Chuck carried Captain Midnight's order to Major Steel to shut



"Have Fliend Pilot Fly Chinese Plane."

off the motors of the plane. It would be necessary to save what little fuel was left.

Meanwhile Captain Midnight questioned Ling. The field had been bombed every day for a week.

Suddenly there was confirmation for Ling's words. From the east came the drone of airplane motors. Beneath the low ceiling of clouds, a squadron of enemy bombers appeared.

Chuck who was just then reach-

They Heard the Drone of Motors

ing the plane to tell Major Steel to shut off the motors, gave the alarm. He hopped into the plane, took the controls and taxied the ship toward a hangar. It was the only chance to save the plane.

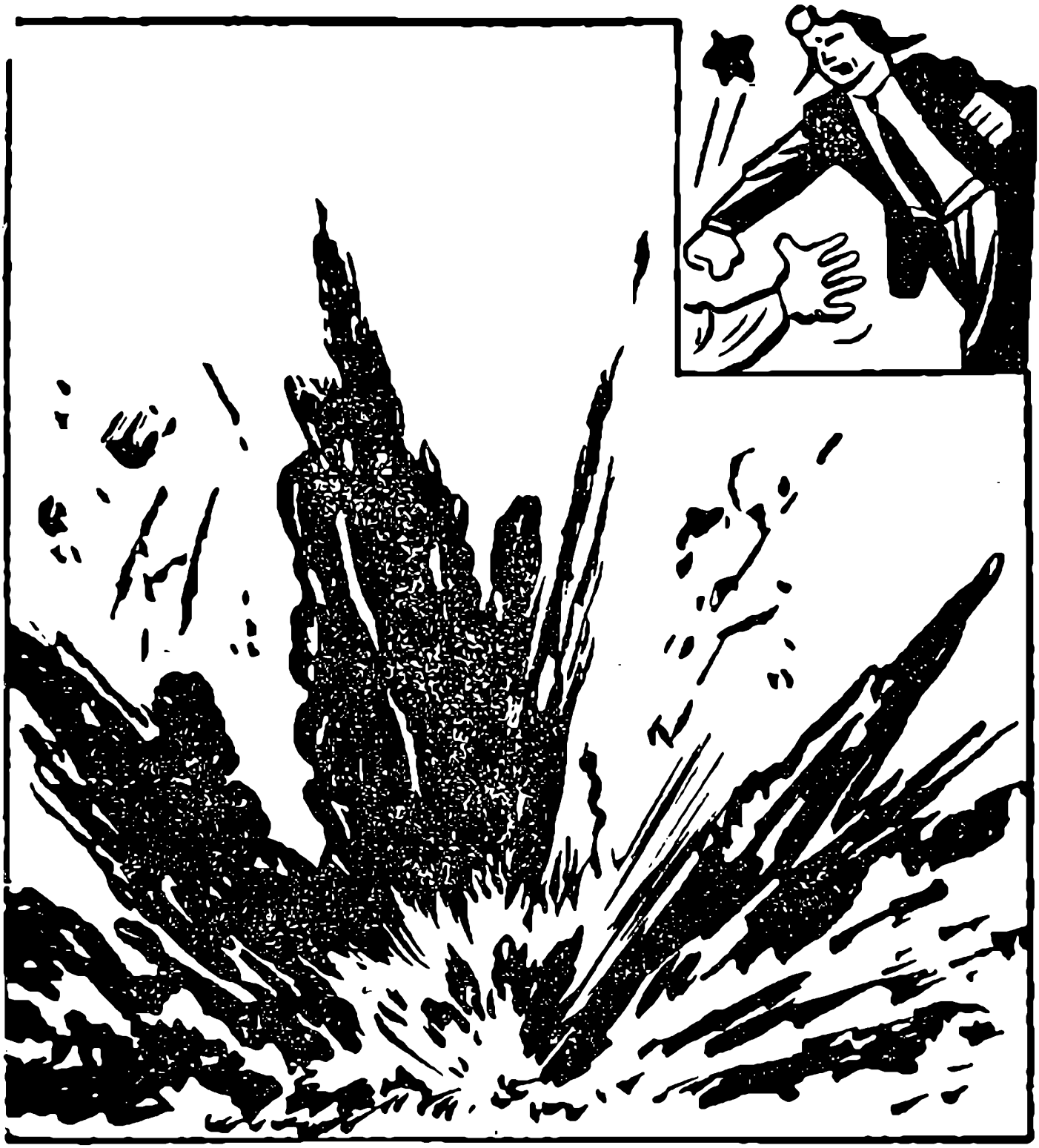
Ling was beckoning for them to follow Captain Midnight and Joyce into a bomb shelter behind the hangar, as Chuck and Major Steel emerged from the plane. Within a few seconds they were inside the shelter, which was little more than

He Taxied the Ship into a Hangar

a trench covered with sandbags.

A furious crash indicated that the bombers had arrived and the air raid was in progress.

As this raid got under way, the giant four-motored plane used by The Barracuda as his flying headquarters was landing in a field only twenty-five miles to the east. The craft rolled slowly to a stop and a man raced to the cabin door from an automobile which was standing on the edge of the field. Colonel



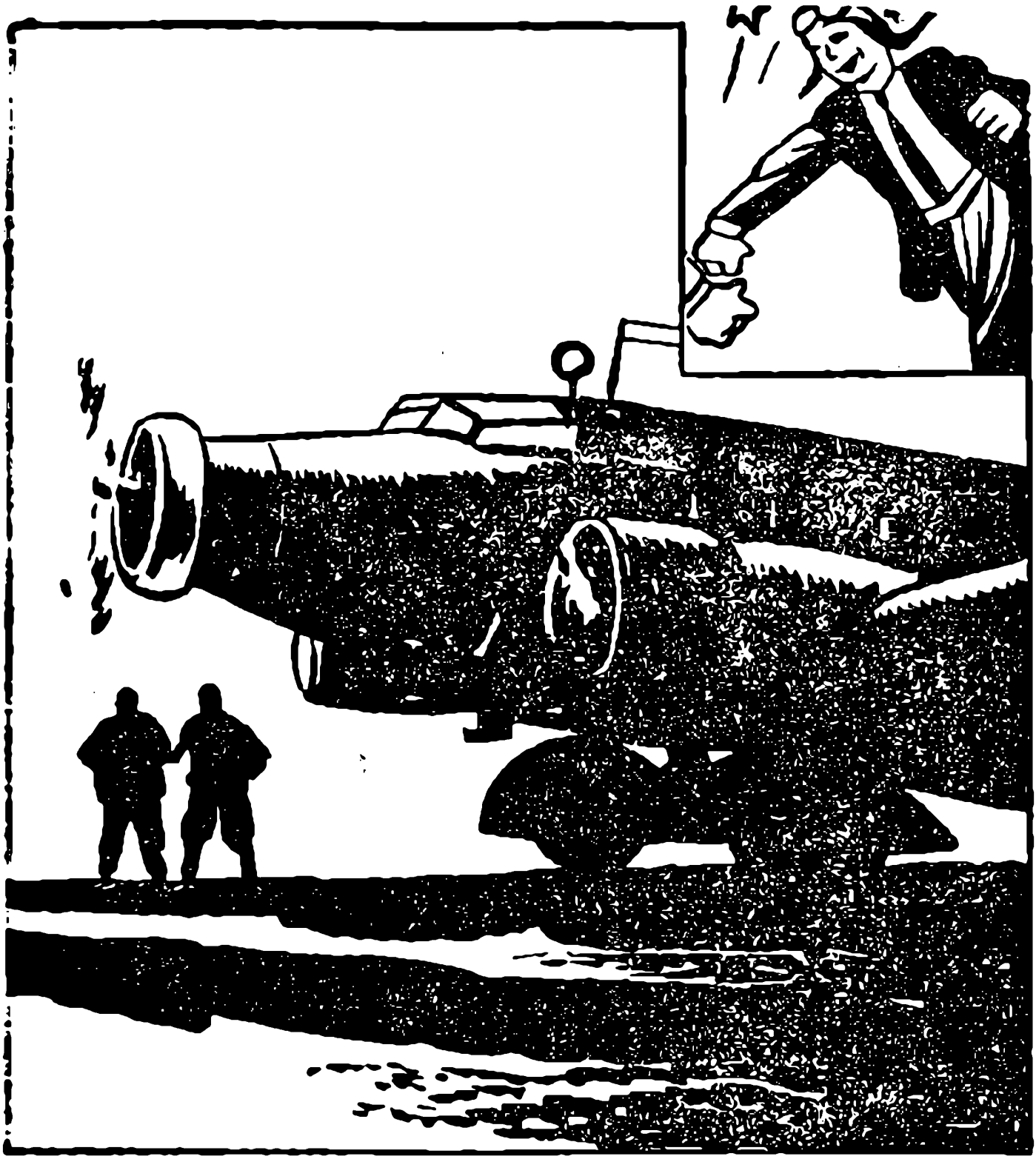
The Bombers Had Arrived

Goto opened the door and greeted the stranger.

"You have a report, X-3-3?" the colonel asked.

The Barracuda appeared in the door behind the colonel as X-3-3 spoke:

"Chinese plane with Secret Squadron agents land early morning Lu Chow airport. Flying field covered with shell hole, but Captain Midnight make landing. Now look for gas to continue journey."



"Captain Midnight Made a Landing."

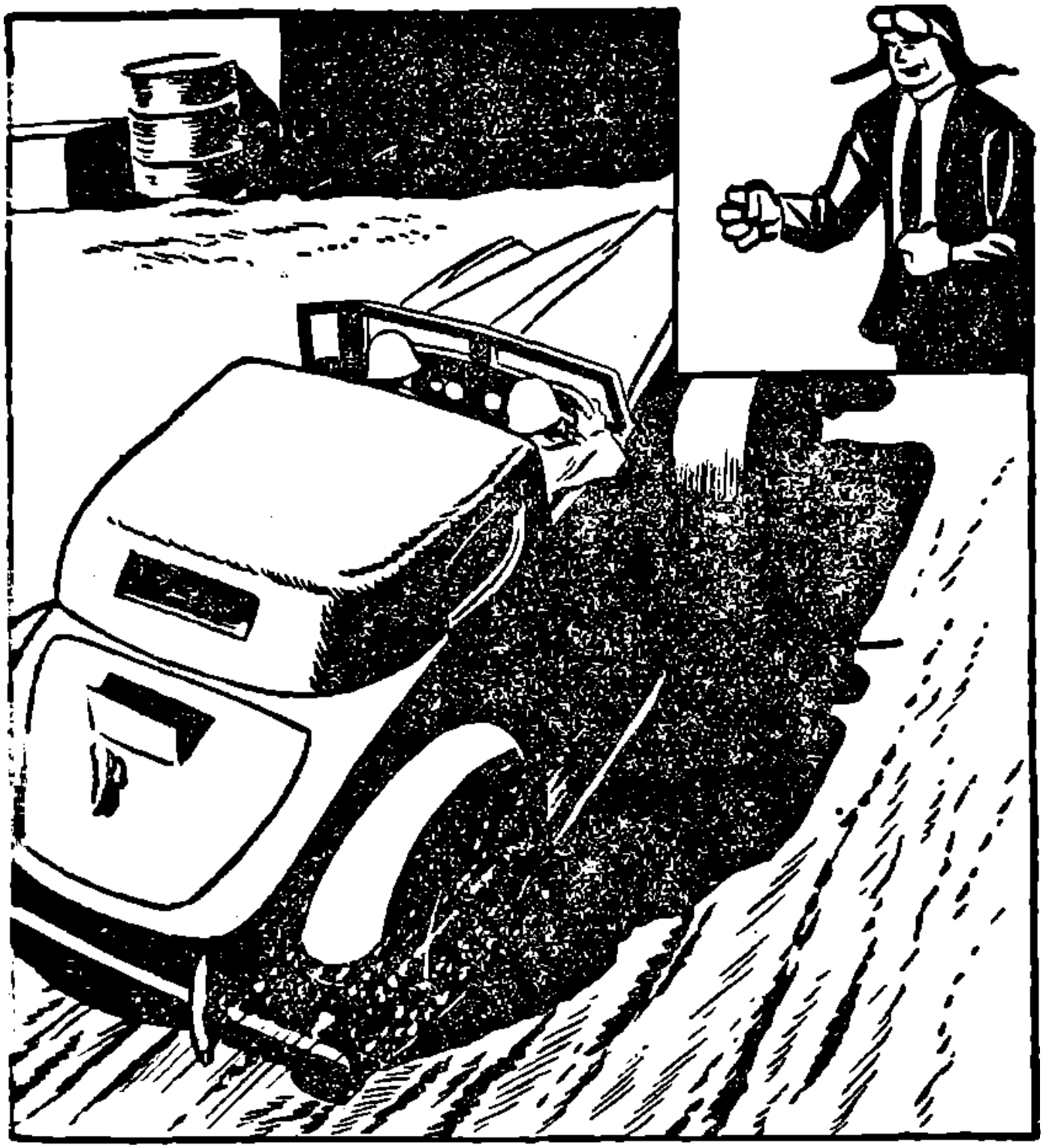
"Is there any gasoline there?"

"Some of wrecked planes have gas in tank. Captain Midnight probably find enough to go to Hongkong."

The Colonel turned to The Barracuda. "Hadn't we better hurry to Lu Chow by car? We have many friends there."

"You have no trouble," X-3-3 said. "Chinese army gone. Also much confusion."

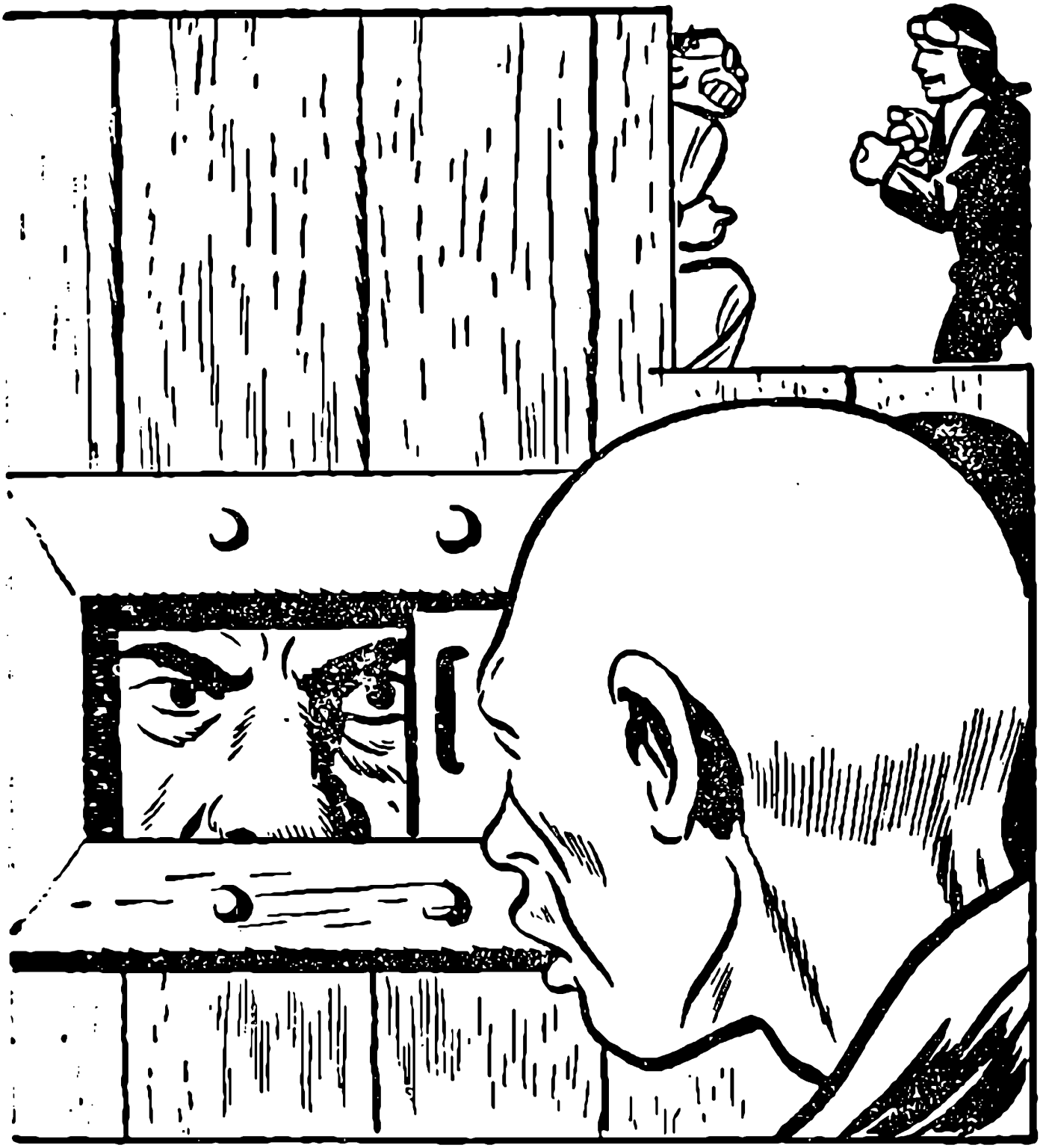
Later in the morning The Barra-



"We Better Hurry to Lu Chow."

cuda called on Dr. Loo Tang in Lu Chow. The doctor, an evil-looking old Chinese traitor, was working in a laboratory in the city. Over a fire a test tube was steaming. Toward this Dr. Loo Tang pointed with this remark.

"You see, my friend, I am always making the same thing. The ingredients may be different but the result is always sure. The Barracuda and Dr. Loo Tang deal in only one commodity—death!" He finish-



The Barracuda Called on Dr. Loo Tang

ed the sentence with fiendish laughter.

"And I have come to buy death from you again," The Barracuda said.

"Who is it this time?" the doctor asked.

"A group known as the Secret Squadron, who are very troublesome. They are at the airport here in Lu Chow. They will cause me much inconvenience if I allow them to leave China alive."

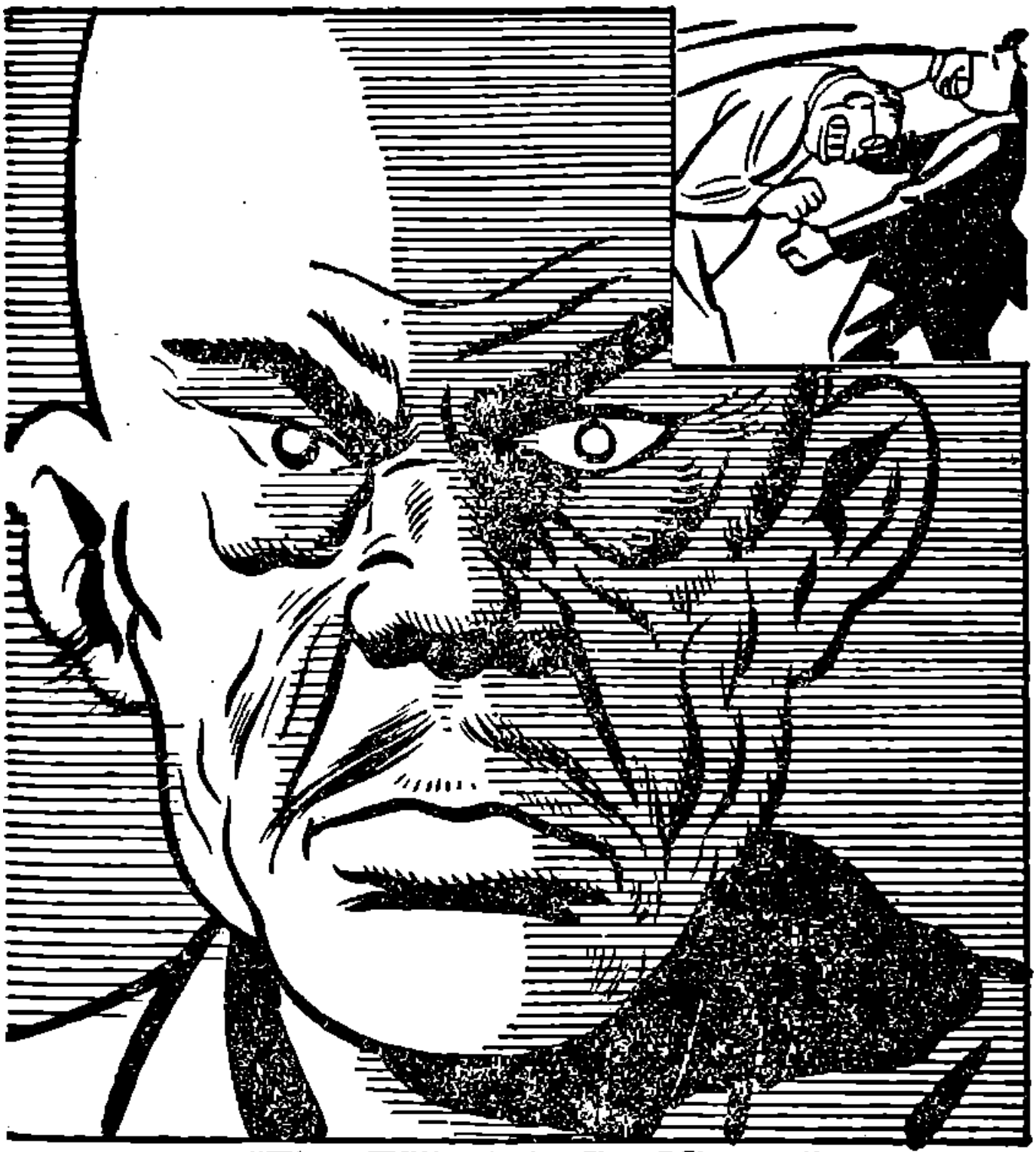
"I Have Come to Buy Death."

"I believe the matter can be arranged. I have poisons and gases the secrets of which warring nations would give fortunes to know. Look at my shelves—" Dr. Tang pointed to row upon row of bottles in the laboratory—"every vial contains enough poison to bring death to a regiment. Here is something no bigger than a litchi nut. If you were to leave it in a room and press the plunger, chemicals inside will slowly unite. In one hour exactly

"I Have Poisons and Gases."

the shell will burst and a poison gas will expand with terrific rapidity. Everyone in the room—everyone in the house—will become sleepy and will die within five minutes."

"This is just what I'm looking for, doctor," The Barracuda said eagerly. "I will have one of my agents place it aboard Captain Midnight's plane. There will be an unfortunate crash. How much do you want?"



"They Will Die in Five Minutes."

"This is a very expensive toy. It will cost ten thousand dollars."

"You are a thief, Dr. Loo Tang, but I will pay you."

"It Will Cost Ten Thousand Dollars."

CHAPTER VIII

POISON GAS

The bombing attack left the five Americans and their Chinese friend unharmed. Although the front of the hangar in which the plane was stored was damaged, the plane escaped injury.

Within a short time the Americans had located a supply of gasoline in wrecked planes at the air-

"I Will Pay You."

port. The supply would assure them of reaching Hongkong and it was quickly transferred by siphon and bucket to the plane. A few natives gathered to watch and one of them climbed aboard. He was quickly ejected by Ichabod Mudd and the door was guarded after that.

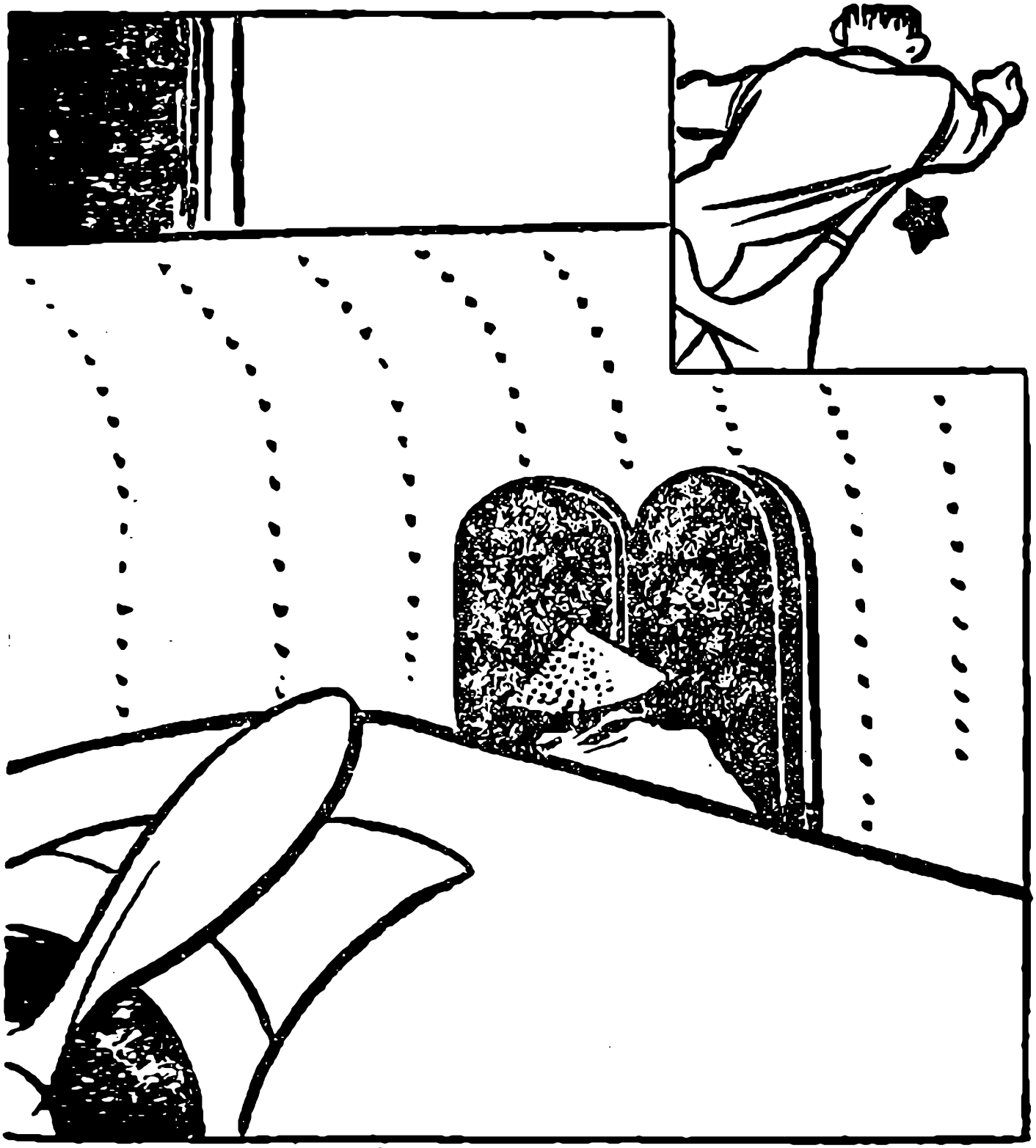
As darkness was beginning to fall the plane took off. In a few minutes they were in the air. Major Steel and Joyce were in the

The Plane Escaped Injury

rear of the plane while Chuck and Captain Midnight were in the control cockpit. Mudd remained forward in the cabin.

Chuck grew sleepy as the plane soared toward Hongkong. Even Captain Midnight found it hard to keep his eyes open. He thought he noticed an odd smell in the air. Something was wrong.

As the captain looked around he saw Chuck lolling forward in his seat. With difficulty, the captain



One of Them Climbed Aboard

roused Chuck. Captain Midnight was so drowsy himself he could hardly hold the controls. Then suddenly the eyes of both men closed.

The great plane roared onward through the mist-laden sky. The monotonous drone of the engines helped the fiendish gas in its deadly work, lulling the two men at the controls into a sleep which could end only in disaster.

Chuck had fallen far back in his

He Noticed an Odd Smell

seat, his chin resting on his chest, his arms moving slowly with the motion of the plane.

Captain Midnight was sitting almost bolt upright, his body held in place by the safety belt. But the poison was doing its work rapidly and the Secret Squadron commander was becoming more relaxed. Slowly, inch by inch, his body moved sideways. The plane, which had been perfectly trimmed, began to bank slowly to the left and the

Captain Midnight Grew Drowsy

nose dropped slightly.

Warned by instincts always attuned to danger, Captain Midnight made a last desperate attempt to save his companions from approaching catastrophe. With every sense prodding his poisoned brain, Captain Midnight jerked up his head with a mighty effort.

He forced a few words from his lips. Chuck stirred, but could not rouse. Then both men relaxed again.

The Poison Was Doing Its Work

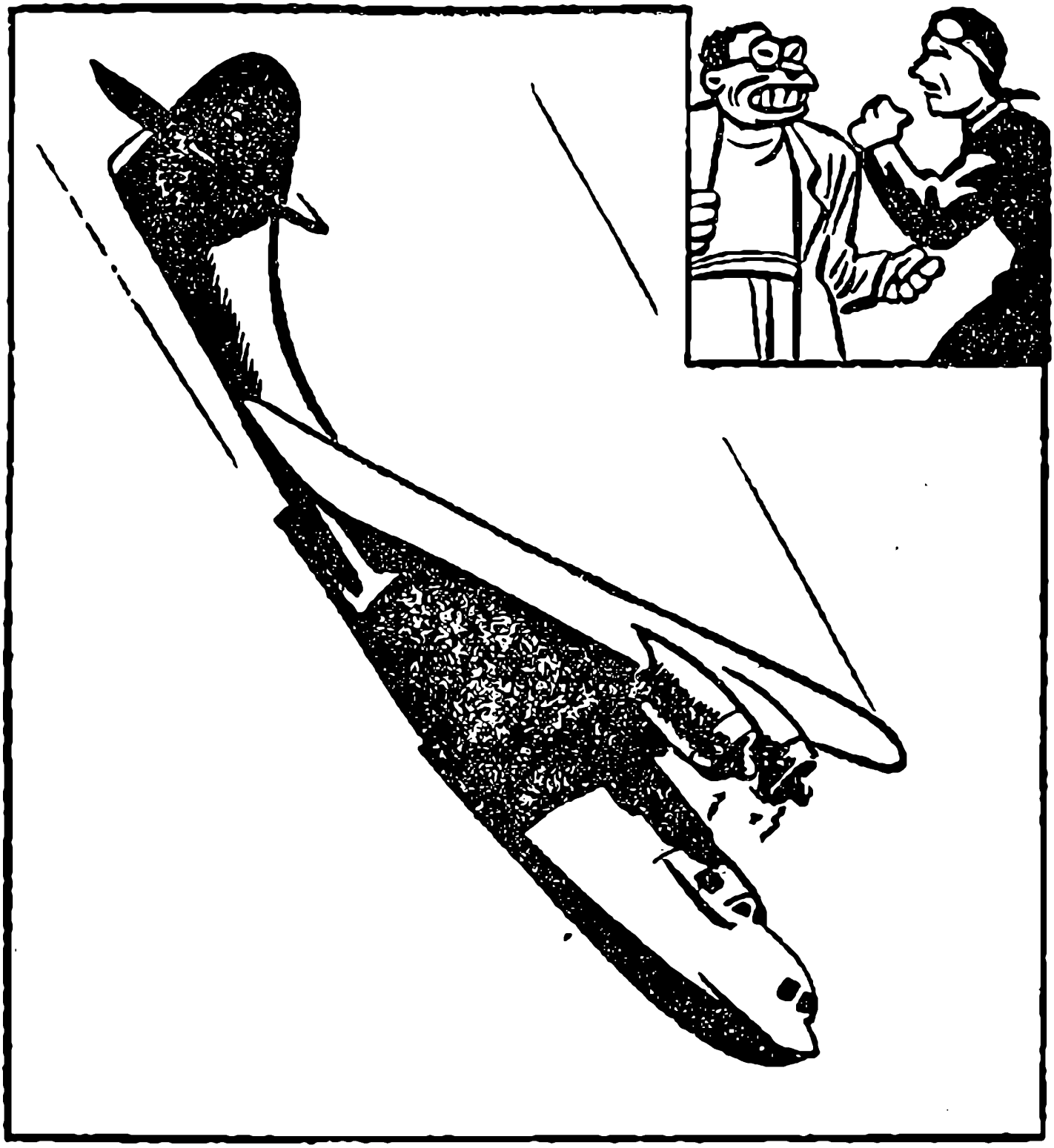
Faster and faster the giant plane banked to the left. The nose dropped lower and suddenly controlled flight became impossible. The plane was seized as if by a giant hand and it began to whip into the first turn of a tail spin. Then the plane began to whirl madly toward the earth.

In the cabin behind, Joyce had been sleeping near an open window. She was the only one in the plane not completely dazed by the poison-

The Plane Began to Bank

ous gas. As the plane whipped suddenly into a spin, she was aroused from slumber, but a swift dizziness came over her. She gripped the seat arms with all her strength and fought desperately to clear her head.

Remembering what Captain Midnight had told her long ago she fixed her eyes straight ahead where the whirling motion was least. Quickly her vision cleared. Then she saw the faithful me-



The Nose Dropped Down

chanic, Ichabod Mudd, bent far over in his seat, his body held only by his safety belt. She leaned forward to help him and became immediately conscious of a strange, sickening odor.

Warned then of what must be wrong, Joyce leaned to the left and unfastened the window catch next to Mudd's seat. Exerting every ounce of strength, the girl pushed the window open and the rotation of the plane in the spin forced life-

Joyce Was Not Completely Dazed

giving air into the cabin.

She shook Mudd, who slowly opened his eyes.

"Ikky! Wake up! Something's wrong. The plane's in a tail spin!" she cried.

"Tail spin? Who's in a tail spin?" Mudd asked, fighting for control of himself.

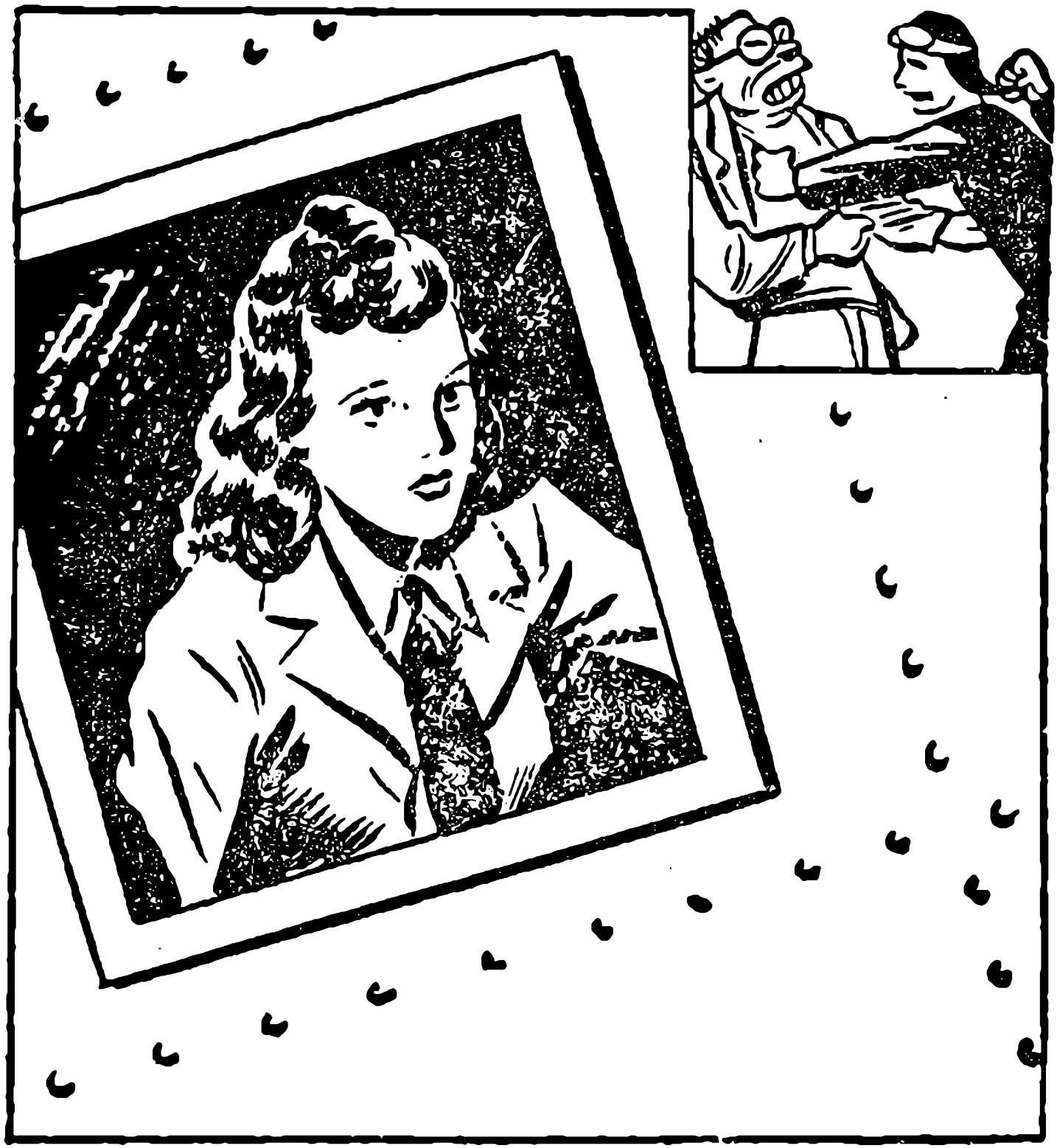
"We are, Ikky! Wake up!" Joyce shouted.

Suddenly Mudd was awake. His eyes caught a glimpse of Chuck's

Her Vision Cleared

head lolling unconsciously above the seat top in the cockpit. Mudd unsnapped his belt and, hanging on desperately, moved forward, followed by Joyce.

A glance at the altimeter showed that the plane was down to fifteen hundred feet and falling rapidly. Captain Midnight was against the wheel. Mudd smashed a window with the radio mike. Then he turned and shook the captain. Mudd slapped him and at last Captain



She Tried to Open the Window

Midnight slowly opened his eyes and shook his head.

"We're in a spin, Captain Midnight, and we're down to five hundred feet," Joyce cried, excitedly.

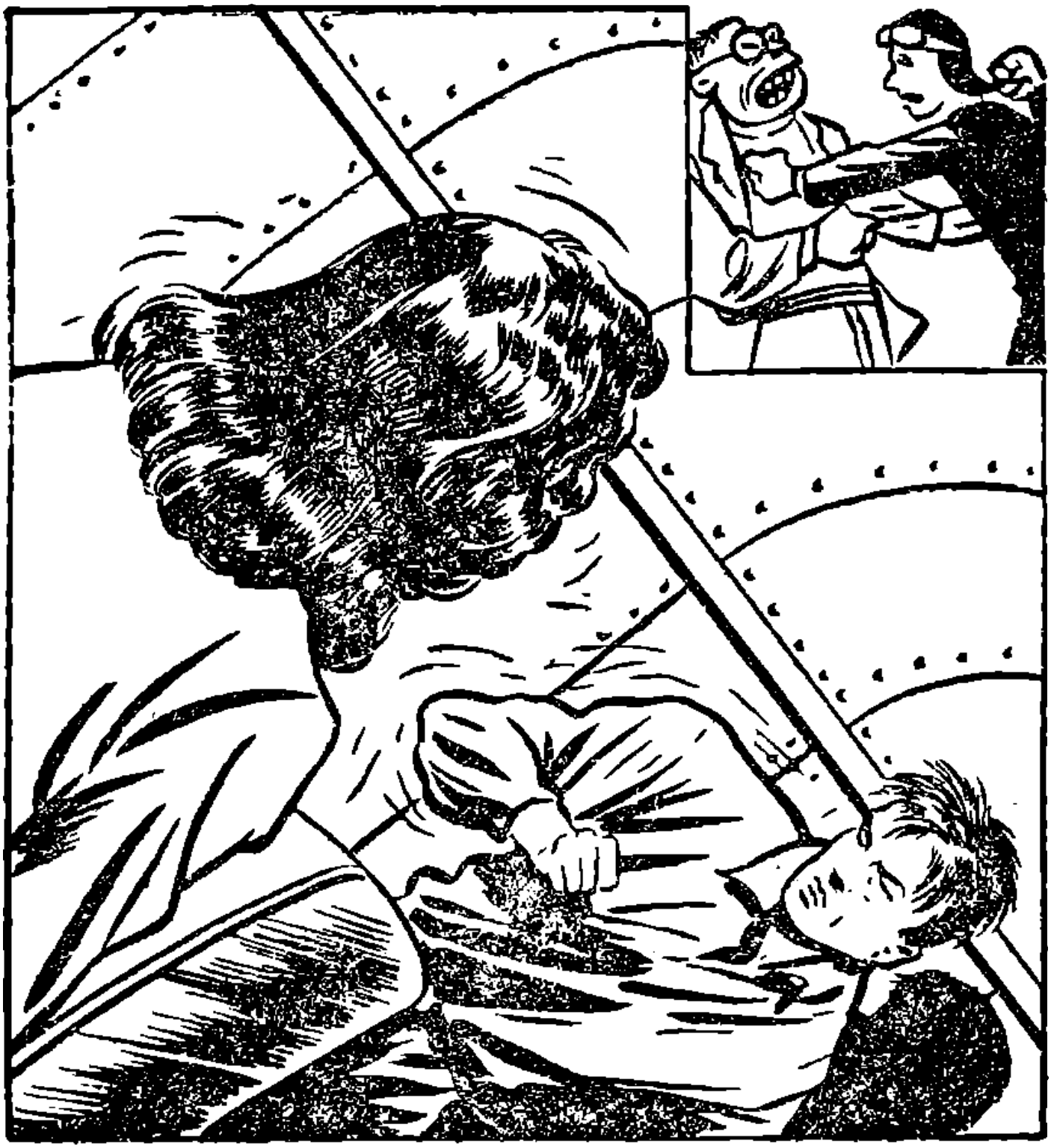
Mudd pulled the captain up and seized the control. The swishing of wind lessened, but the nose still was pointed downward. Then the plane came out of the low ceiling of clouds. Ahead of them was water. They were going to crash into the

"Ikky! Wake Up!"

stormy sea.

A desperate tug on the controls was pulling the ship out of the spin, but she was close to the water and had to stay in the air. The throttle sent the ship zooming upward after it seemed for a moment to swim along the tops of the waves.

The ship was saved and the next thing was to determine the extent of damage of the poison, but a quick check showed both Chuck

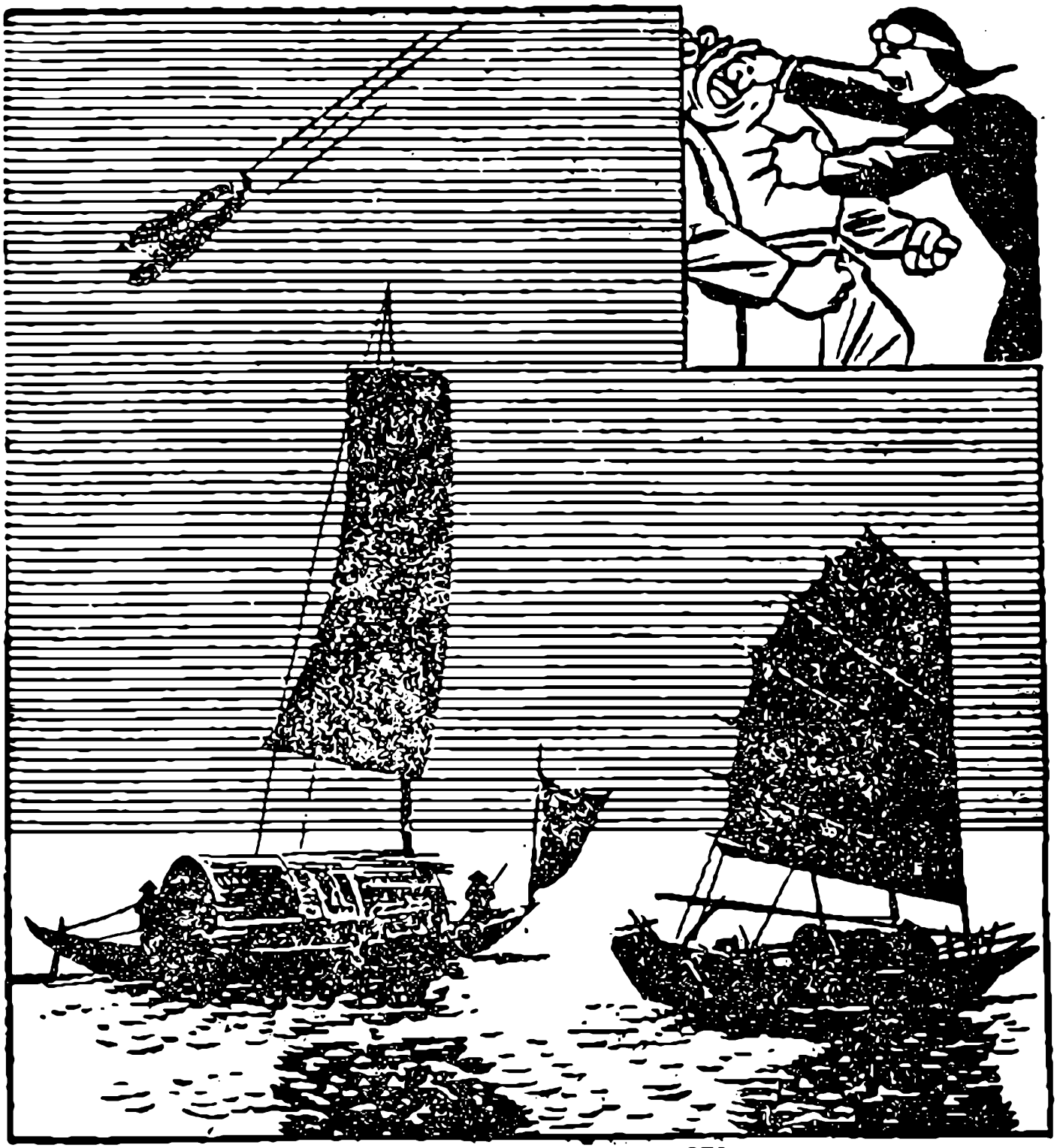


"We're in a Tailspin!"

and Major Steel reviving with the fresh air that was blowing through the cabin.

Ahead of the ship were lights, apparently those of a seacoast town. As the ship approached, the occupants were able to make out junks in the water near the shore. It was only a Chinese fishing village.

Feeling unable to continue the flight without some rest to recover from the effects of the poison, Cap-



Ahead of Them Was Water

tain Midnight brought the amphibian plane down on the water of the bay.

Suddenly the lights of the Chinese junks ahead all blinked out!

"Wonder what's the reason for that?" Mudd mused.

"Maybe they're afraid we're an enemy plane," Chuck said. "We'll see if there's anyone aboard these junks who can speak English and they can tell us how far Hongkong

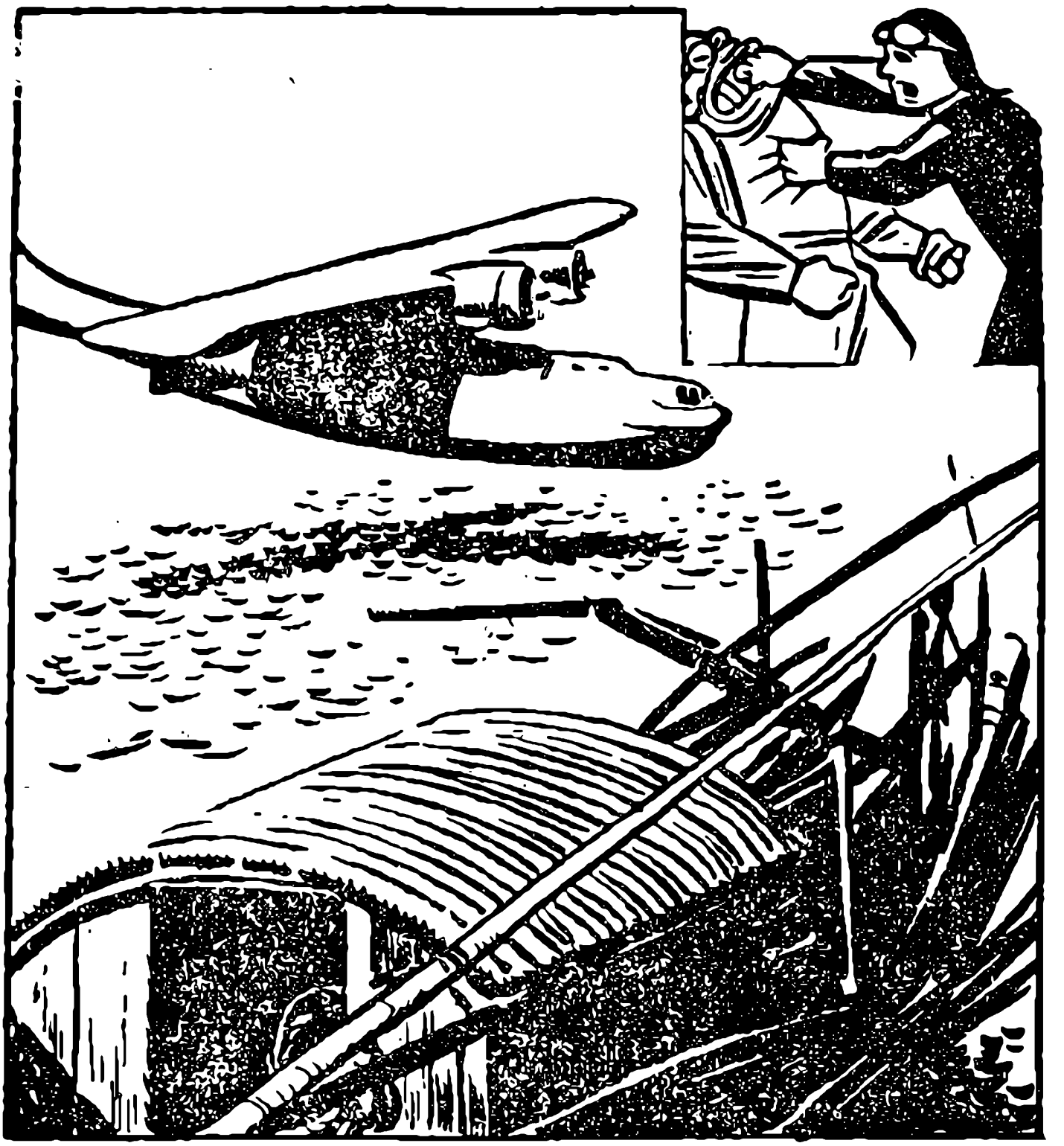
There Was a Chinese Fishing Village

is from here."

The plane moved toward the nearest junk. Suddenly there was a cry from Joyce. Captain Midnight glanced out of the cockpit window. The junks had closed in in the darkness and were now on three sides of the plane and ahead of the aircraft was the shore.

The Americans were completely hemmed in.

Then from the nearest junk a bright spotlight lighted the scene.



He Brought the Amphibian Down

The glare showed decks lined with guns. These were no ordinary fishing junks. They were ships of Chinese pirates!

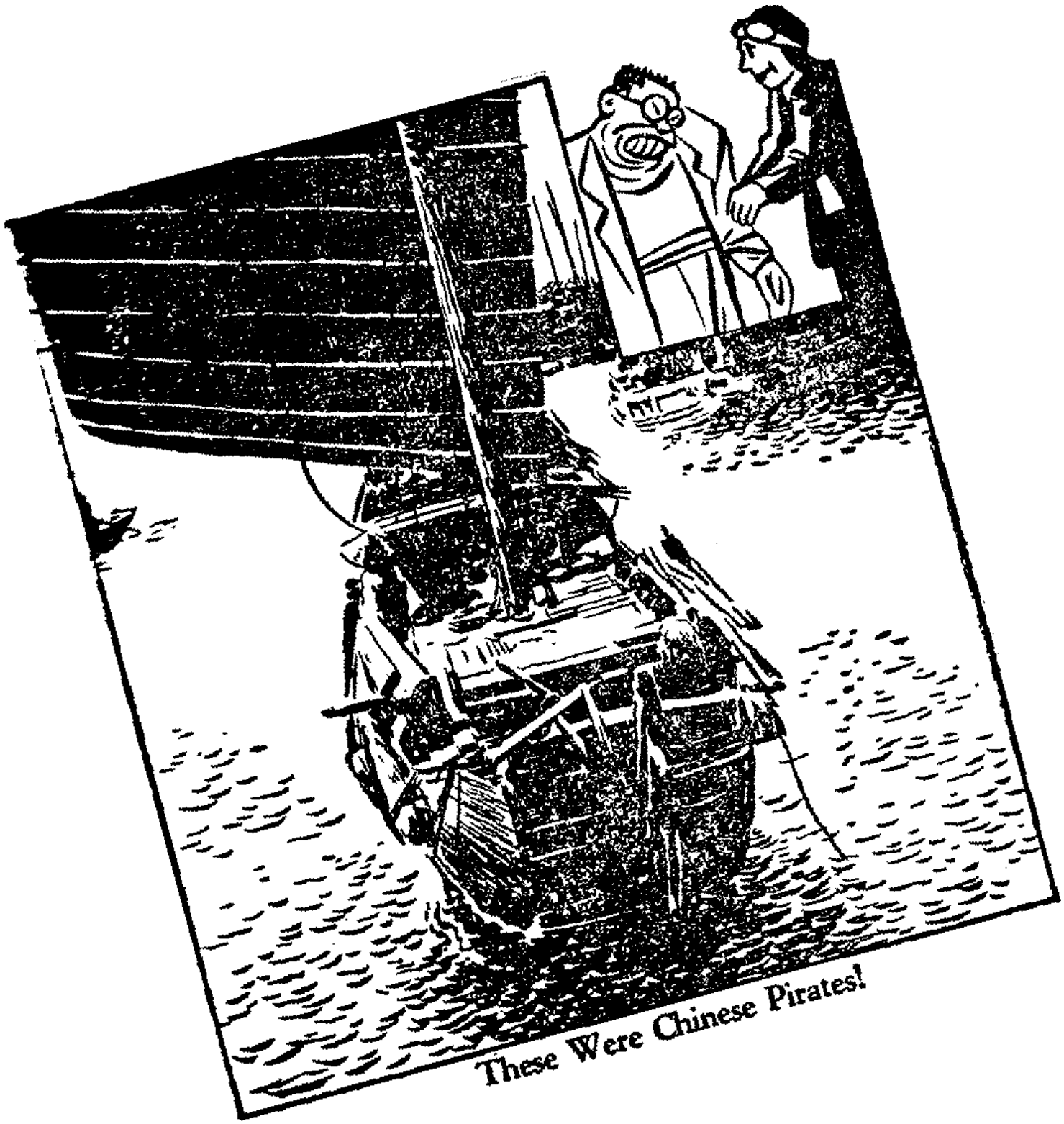
The Americans Were Hemmed In

CHAPTER IX

THE PIRATES OF BIAS BAY

Captain Midnight observed that he was in no position to start anything. He, Chuck, the major and Mudd were still too dazed from the effects of the poison gas to give a good account of themselves.

A sampan was leaving the junk to the right of the American plane and it was moving toward the air-



These Were Chinese Pirates!

craft. Two men were in the small boat, one sculling it and the other standing in front, his eyes on the plane. As it approached, Mudd's voice called out:

"Hey there! You savvy gong-tong-wa?"

There was a pause and a coarse voice answered:

"No savvy boat-side Chinee. All same speak English."

"Well, clean my carbon!" Mudd explained. "Chinese in ten easy

A Sampan Was Leaving a Junk

lessons! They all speak English."

"Would you ask the captain of the junk on our port side to move so we can turn around?" Captain Midnight hailed.

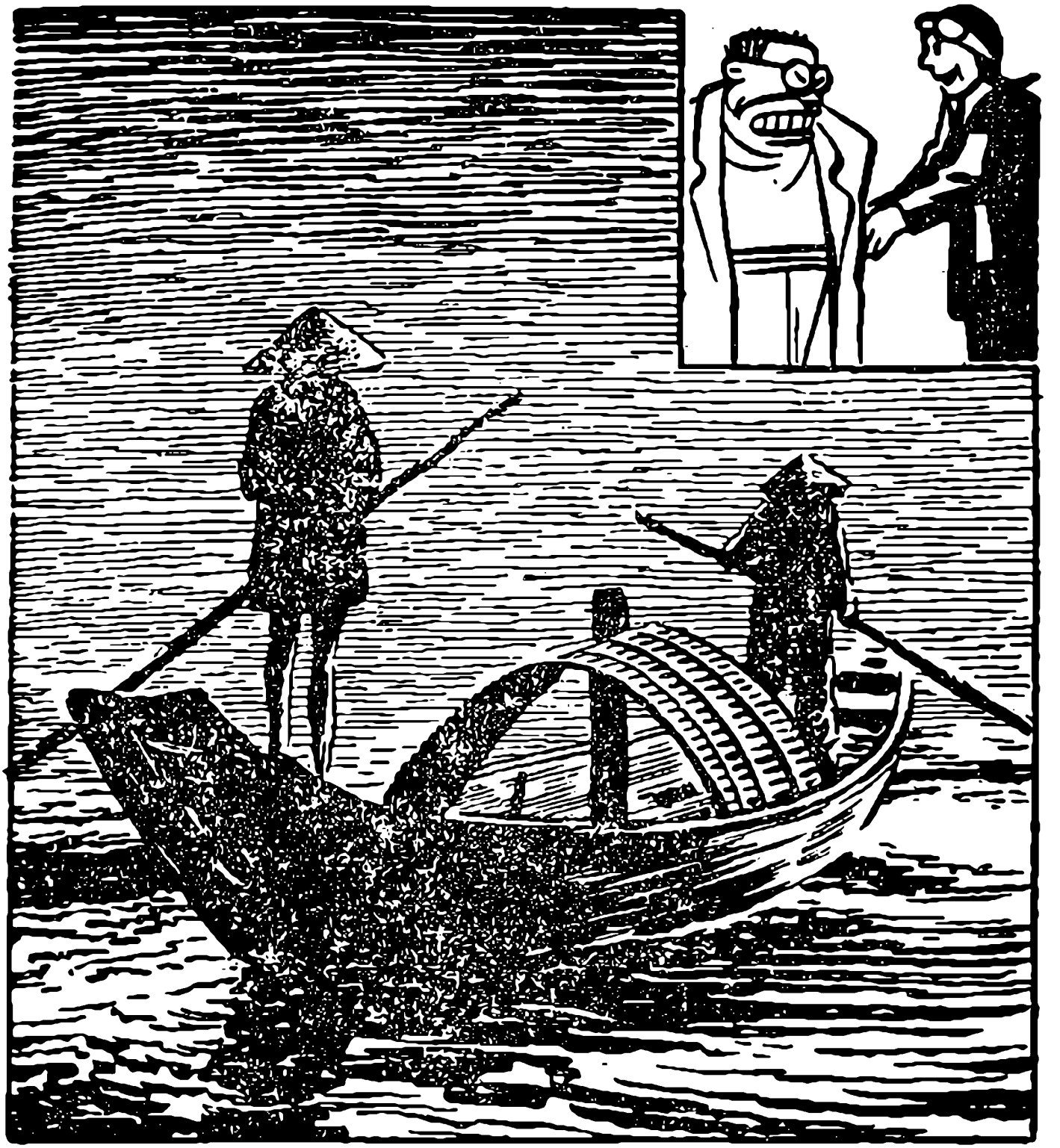
"Sure. Can do. Maybe later. First, talk business."

"What do you mean? What business?"

"Business velly important. Make payment Cho Yuk."

"Who's Cho Yuk?"

"Cho Yuk big taipan. You pay



Two Men Were in the Boat

money, then turn 'round. Go on way."

The inference was obvious and the Americans were in no position to refuse. These men were pirates and they demanded a ransom. Captain Midnight sensed it was best to bargain.

"How much do you want?" Captain Midnight asked.

"Cho Yuk like Amellican. Other men velly much money. You not so much. Ten thousand dolla do."

"Make Payment Cho Yuk."

"Loopin' loops!" Joyce ejaculated.

"We haven't that much money," Captain Midnight said.

"Velly solly," the Chinese answered. "You stay here. Send for money."

"But it's important that we leave at once. We've important business at Hongkong."

"Then get money chop-chop. If money come chop-chop, then you go chop-chop." As the Chinese spoke

"How Much Do You Want?"[1]

the glare of the searchlight showed a grim light in his eyes. "Not use ladio. Send messengel. Use ladio, then Chinaman shoot with machine guns. I laise hand, give signal."

A hurried conference was being held between the Americans in the plane.

The man in the sampan grew impatient.

"No more makee talk. Leave plane chop-chop. If not, laise hand.

"Ten Thousand Dolla Do."

Shoot gun."

There was nothing to do but obey the order.

Captain Midnight's mind was working furiously as the prisoners were taken ashore and locked up in a rude shack. He had to get to Hongkong and notify American officials what had been found in The Barracuda's mansion headquarters. A map of the Pearl Harbor naval base was not in the renegade's possession as a curio. There

"No More Makee Talk."

was a sinister purpose behind it. There might be another surprise attack on Hawaii at any moment.

As a prisoner of the pirates, Captain Midnight could not get his information back to America so that plans could be made to intercept the attackers.

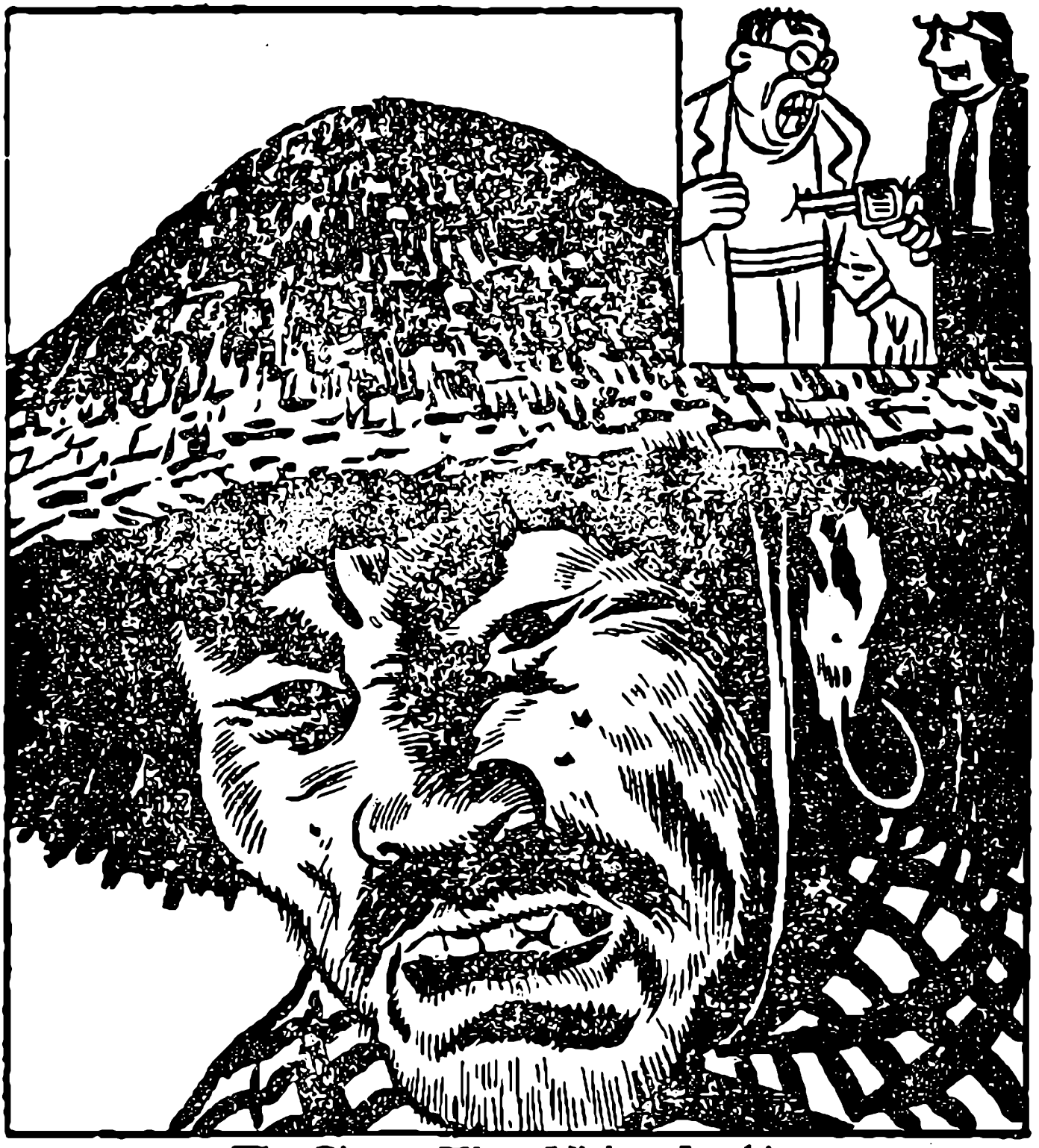
Outside the shack a number of vicious-looking pirates patrolled with automatic guns. These pirates were one of many guerrilla bands that had risen during the retreat

They Were Locked in a Rock Search

of the central Chinese government from the invader. The question was, which side was this cutthroat band on?

There was another thing to consider. Major Steel, who already had been ill when he was rescued from his imprisonment, had taken a turn for the worse as a result of the poison gas. He had to be taken somewhere for medical treatment.

Through the night the captain pondered. At dawn, as his friends



The Pirates Were Vicious-Looking

roused from troubled slumbers, the fog was gone. Captain Midnight looked out of the shack window. He knew where he was. This was Bias Bay, home of pirates for centuries. Captain Midnight had visited it once before in his travels.

Captain Midnight and his companions discussed their plight over a breakfast of rice brought by the captors. Midway during the discussion, the sound of an airplane

At Dawn the Fog Was Gone

brought them to the windows of their jail.

Captain Midnight's eyes caught a glimpse of Wolf's head markings on the plane as it veered away before a burst of machine-gun fire from the junks in the harbor. The plane was one of The Barracuda's Wolf Squadron. The pilot apparently had noticed the plane in the harbor and had flown back to inform his chief of the location of Captain Midnight.

This Was Bias Bay

The situation was desperate now. The captain was certain that by now The Barracuda had learned that the map of Pearl Harbor had been taken from the teakwood table. No effort would be spared to stop the Americans from warning Hawaii of its latest danger. If Captain Midnight escaped, the new attack on Hawaii might be made ahead of time, before adequate defense could be prepared.

As the Americans discussed this,

Several Wolf Planes Appeared

another roar came overhead. A huge four-motored amphibian, followed by a squadron of a dozen Wolf planes, soared over the village. The amphibian circled and landed far out in the harbor. Sometime later a sampan sculled toward it and returned.

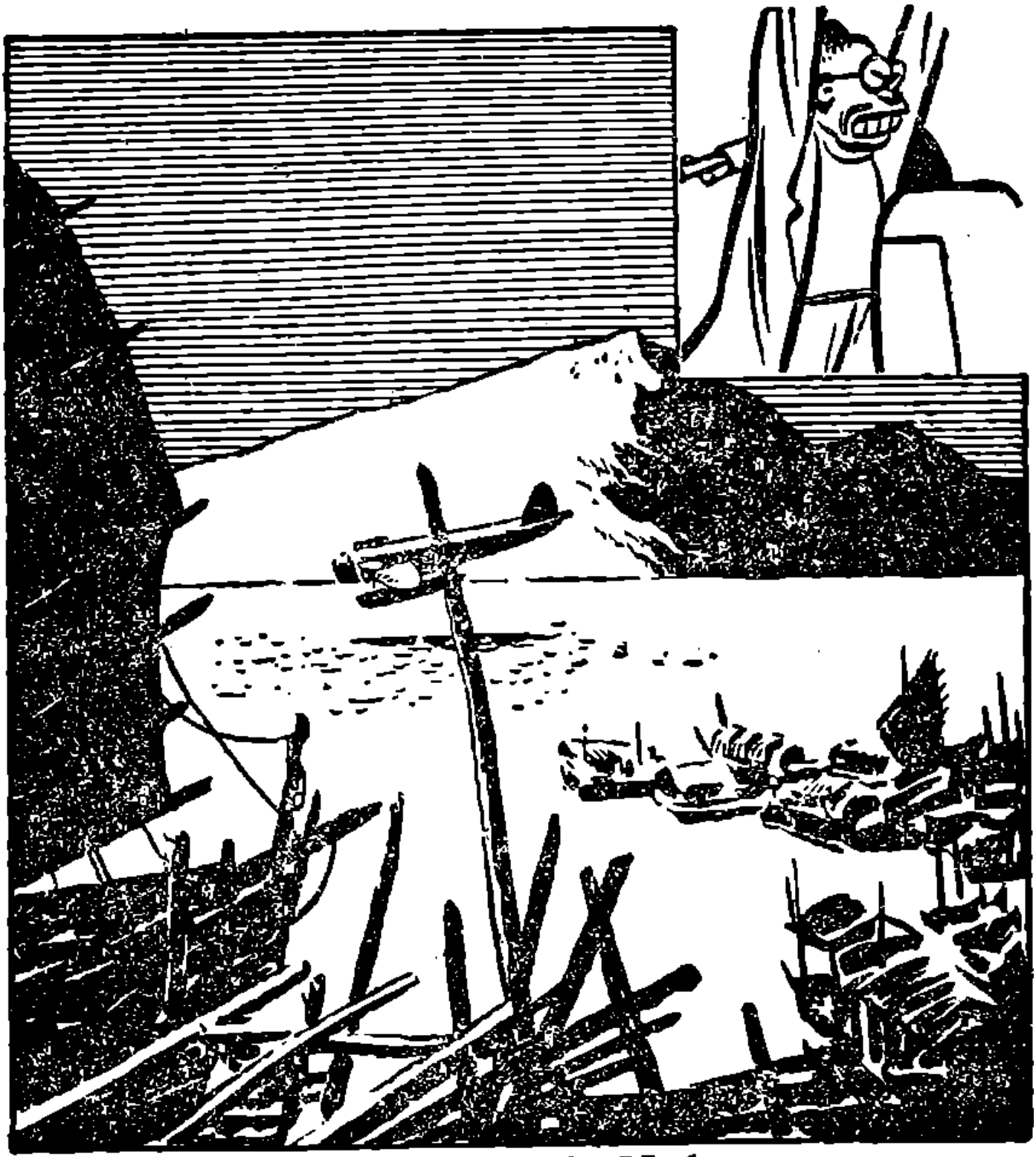
Then the watchers in the shack saw Mong, the pirate who had made them prisoner the night before, and an older man approaching the shack.

They Heard Another Roar

"I come see you," Mong announced as he stepped in the door of the jail. "Velly important. Bling long Cho Yuk, taipan of village."

Captain Midnight and Chuck bowed to Cho Yuk.

"Cho Yuk no speak English," Mong explained. "I make talk. Have visitor big plane. Wish take you and other prisoners longside him. He pay big money. Ask you ten thousand dollel. Ask him fifty thousand dollel. He say he pay."



It Landed in the Harbor

"I see," Captain Midnight said, gravely. "But if he is willing to pay, why does he bring his planes overhead?"

"You velly smart man," Mong complimented the captain. "Mong think same thing. Why visitor want prisoners so bad?"

"He wants us out of the way so we'll not be able to help your people against its invaders," Captain Midnight said pointedly.

"So? You like help China?"

"Visitor Wish Take You."

"Yes. I am Captain Midnight and I and my men will aid your country, fighting for freedom."

"Captain Midnight!" Mong exclaimed. "Have heard honorable name before. Name of Captain Midnight known all over China. I make talk with Cho Yuk. Him think no need for visitor bling sword when make business, too."

Mong spoke in sing-song Chinese to Cho Yuk, who replied with a vigorous bobbing of his head.

"I Am Captain Midnight."

"Cho Yuk say must have money. After get money, then you go. Perhaps get money from visitor."

"Perhaps I can help you," Captain Midnight said. "Let me go back with you. But you must allow me to do something."

"You like go with me?" Mong asked in surprise.

"Yes, but you must allow my friend, Chuck Ramsay, to go aboard our plane and get a gun. Then you must let him go to the top

"Captain Midnight!"

of the hill overlooking the big plane in the harbor. Your men can go with him and this is in your interest as well as ours."

Mong conversed with Cho Yuk, who nodded his head. A few minutes later Mong walked down the hill toward the amphibian plane, which had moved in to the water's edge to receive the pirate leader.

Mong paused before entering the craft.

"I make promise leturn one hour.

"Perhaps I Can Help You."

You have money leady?"

The Barracuda stepping out on the beach, followed by Colonel Goto, nodded. "Yes, but where are the prisoners?"

"Cho Yuk have own way do business. Give money first, then you get plisona."

Colonel Goto counted out the money to Mong.

"Where Are the Prisoners?"

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE

Mong recounted the money, then stepped back and raised his hand as a signal. Down the hill trudged a single man, Captain Midnight.

"Where are the others?" The Barracuda asked.

"One man sick. All same you get," Mong replied.

Captain Midnight approached

"Give Money First."

smiling. It was the first time he had met The Barracuda and for a moment the two men stood facing each other, appraising each other.

"I don't believe you have been very comfortable here," The Barracuda said. "I have come to take you away. But it is enough for me to tell you that you cannot be allowed to leave China." The renegade turned to Colonel Goto. "Arrest him Colonel. You, Mr. Mong, will stay here while my men go for

Captain Midnight Approached

the others."

At that instant Captain Midnight raised his hand. A rifle shot rang out from the hilltop and a sharp cry of pain came from Colonel Goto who clutched his shoulder and dropped back after he had started toward Captain Midnight.

The Cuda jerked a pistol from a holster at his side and pointed it at Captain Midnight.

"If I were you I would not be so

"I Have Come to Take You Away."

reckless with that gun, Barracuda!" Captain Midnight said. His words rang sharply and the muzzle of the gun lowered. "I gave a signal a moment ago and the colonel was wounded. At the top of that hill is a man with a gun fitted with a telescopic sight. He has that gun aimed at your heart, Barracuda, and he will shoot you if I am harmed."

"But you are surrounded by my men and my planes are over-

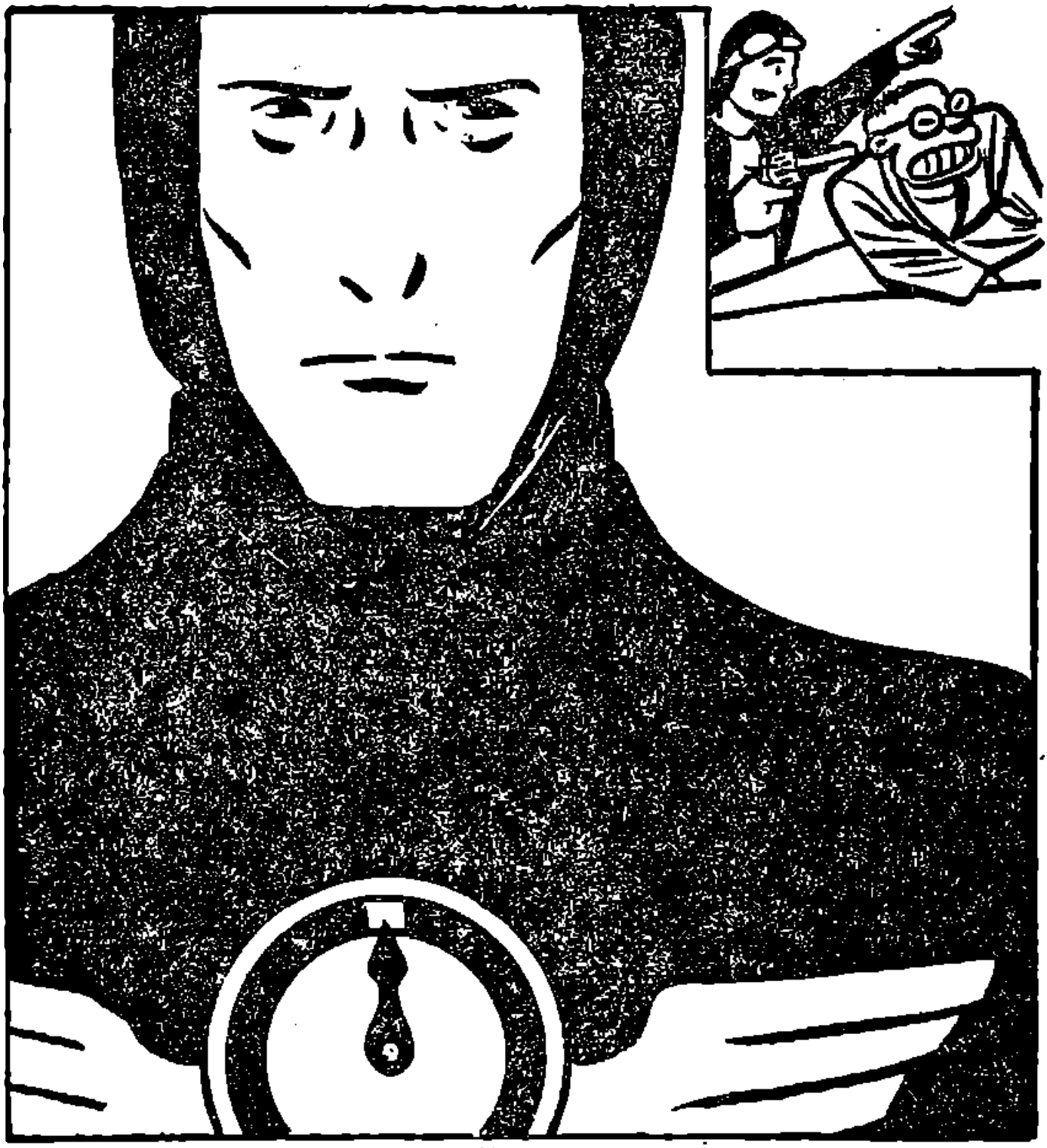
A Rifle Shot Rang Out

head," The Barracuda said.

"You have planned well, but not well enough," Captain Midnight replied. "Your death would end many troubles in the East. We would trade our lives to settle this trouble."

The Barracuda studied the words. Captain Midnight was not bluffing.

"I recognize a high degree of genius when I see it, Captain," he said. "For the moment you hold the



"He Will Shoot You."

winning hand, but the game is not over. We will meet again under different circumstances. I shall call my men off and leave."

The Barracuda signaled the radio operator and instantly the squadron of Wolf Pilots overhead turned and headed inland. Soon afterward Captain Midnight permitted The Barracuda and Colonel Goto to board their plane and depart.

"Cho Yuk be very happy," Mong

"You Have Not Planned Well."

said gleefully. "Only ask ten thousand dollel. Now get fifty thousand dollel."

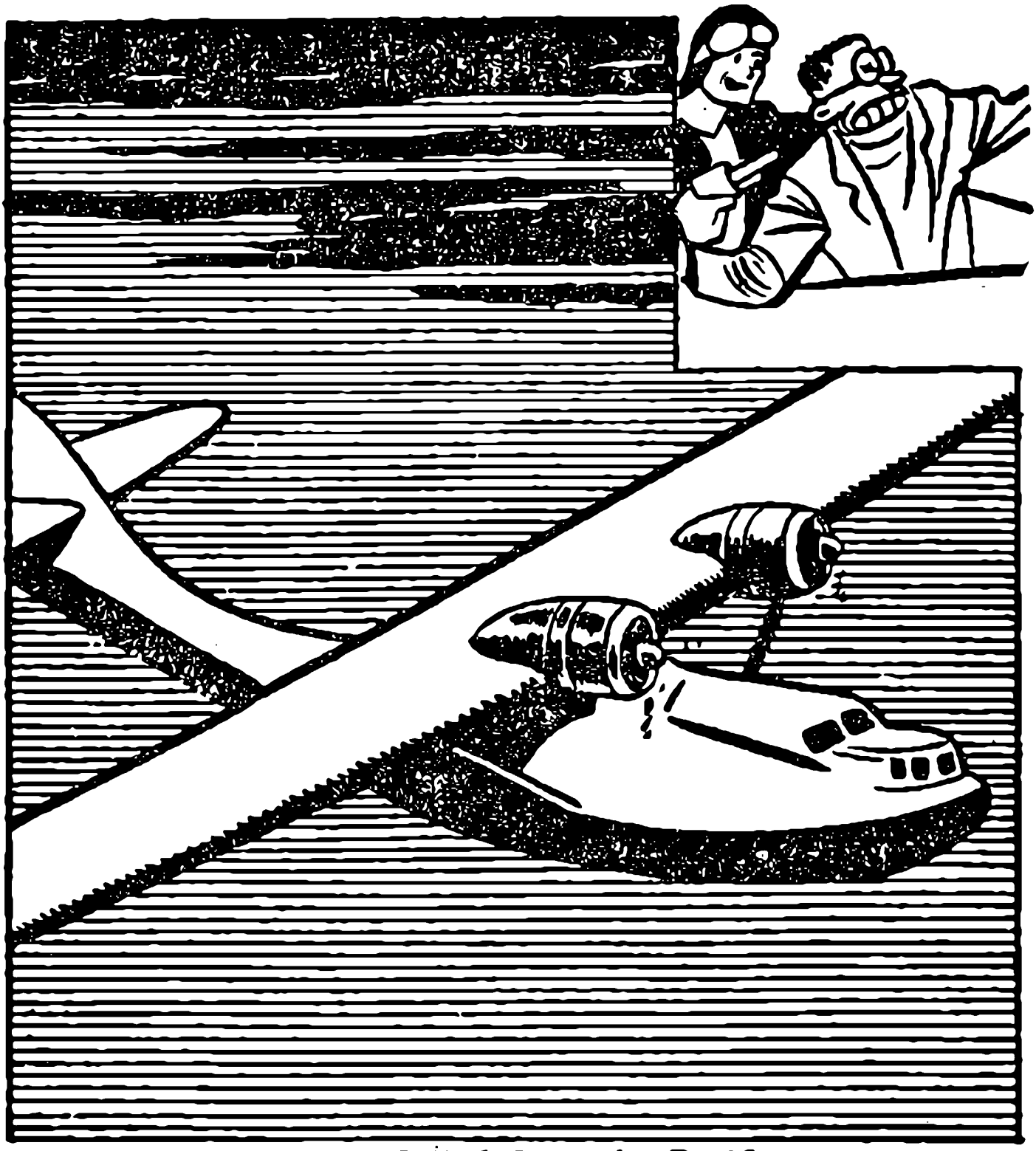
Some hours later the Secret Squadron leader, Chuck, Joyce and Ichabod Mudd were sailing over the waters of the Pacific. Major Steel had been left in a British hospital at Hongkong to convalesce, but Captain Midnight had urgent business in Hawaii. Even now, with Chuck at the controls, Captain Midnight was busy transmit-

"I Shall Call My Men Off."

ting coded instructions to Secret Squadron operatives based at Pacific islands.

At last Captain Midnight finished with his work. He took his place at the controls and ordered Chuck to rest. For a short time the plane flew steadily. Then as the captain noticed the others had dozed off he began circling slowly. His eyes were on the western horizon.

Captain Midnight was waiting for something.



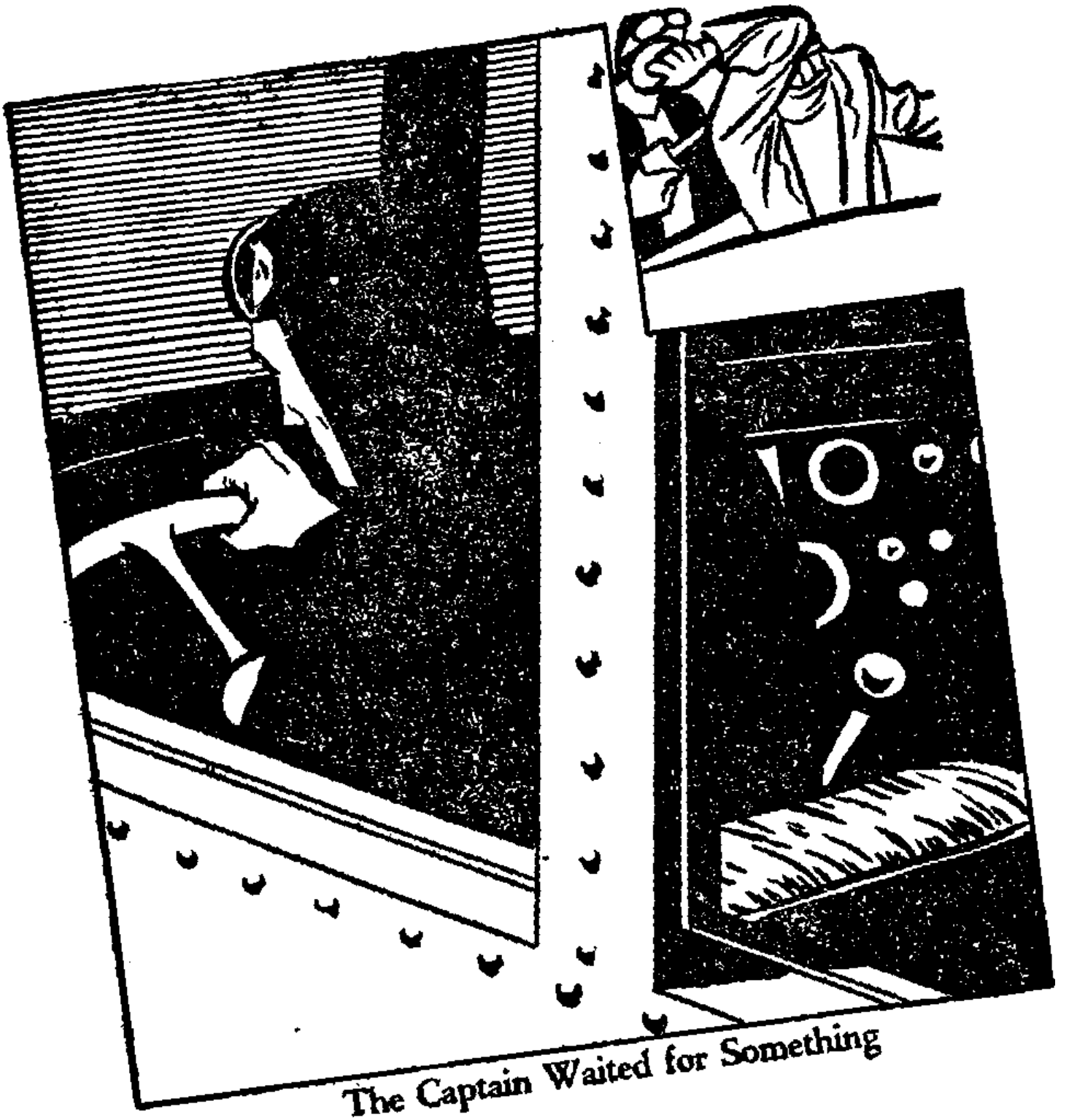
They Sailed Over the Pacific

Suddenly he seemed to see what he was looking for. It appeared at first as a huge flock of geese flying over the ocean. He turned and shouted to the others.

"Wake up, everybody!" he called. "Mudd, Chuck! Man the machine guns. Joyce, I need your help, too!"

"Wha-what?" Mudd spluttered.

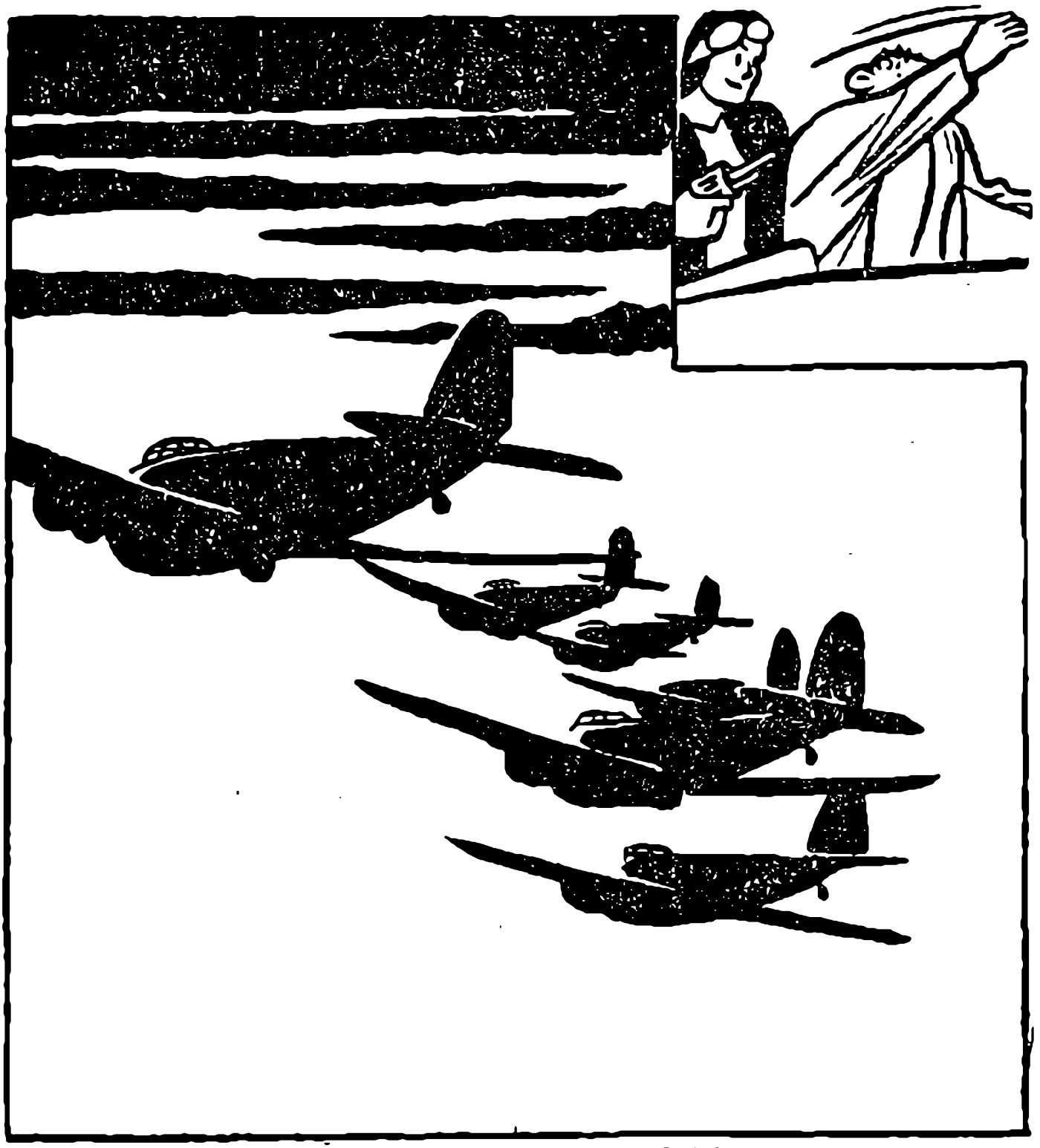
Captain Midnight pointed to the east. "Wolf Pilots," he said. "They're flying to attack Pearl



The Captain Waited for Something

Harbor."

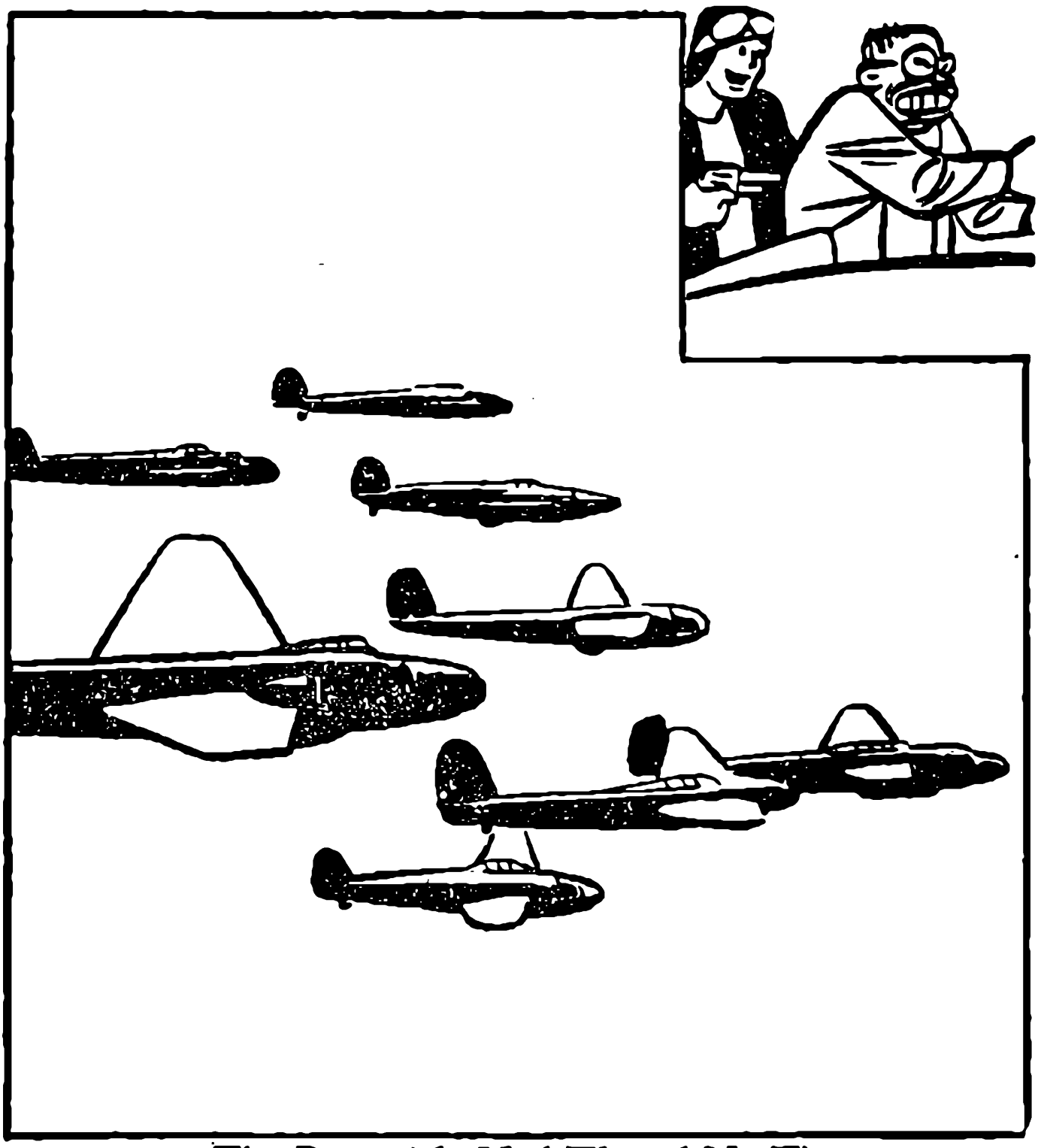
The attack had come even sooner than Captain Midnight had anticipated. The Barracuda had wasted no time in getting his men together before new, adequate preparations had been made by American forces in the Pacific. Captain Midnight had hoped that his scouting in the Pacific would not be needed, but now he saw that this single plane was America's first line of defense.



"Wolf Pilots!" He Said

The captain and his friends were at a disadvantage. They had only one plane, much less ammunition than the enemy. But Captain Midnight had resourcefulness and his friends had fighting qualities that would be a match even for the death-hungry Wolf Pilots. The American-built plane operated by Captain Midnight had no blind spots.

"Joyce," Captain Midnight ordered. "Take the controls."



The Barracuda Had Wasted No Time

Joyce sprang forward eagerly and Captain Midnight ran to the rear of the plane to man a machine gun. Through the communications phone he directed Joyce to steer eastward.

The Wolf Pilots were gaining. They knew the identity of the single plane in their line of flight. Apparently The Barracuda himself was among those planes, directing the attack.

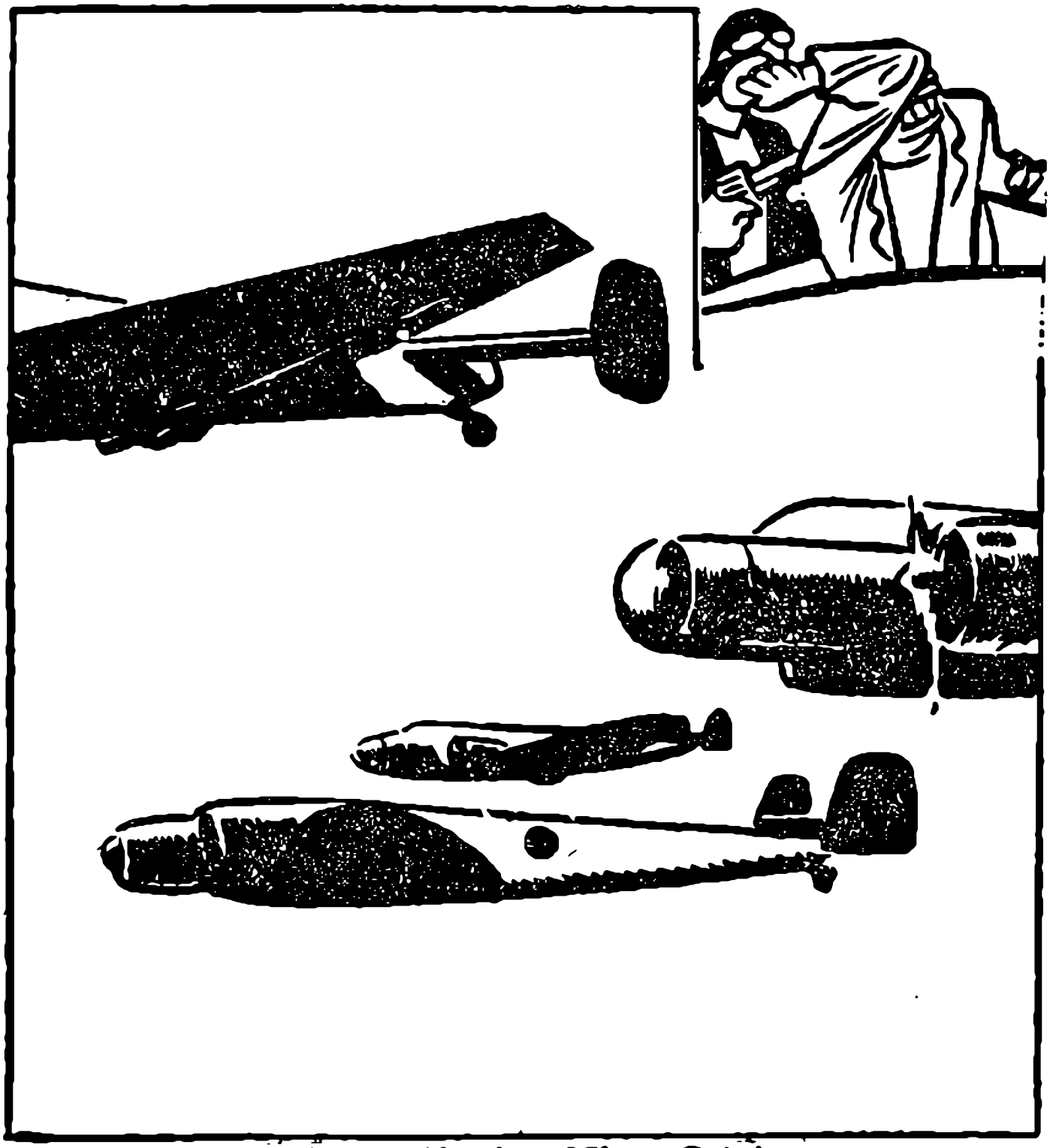
The nearest plane came closer.

"Joyce, Take the Controls."

Captain Midnight's machine gun in the tail sent a stream of bullets into the engine of the craft. It wobbled, lost altitude and dropped back with a crippled motor.

But this was only one of hundreds. The sky around the ship was black with Wolf Pilots. Machine guns of Chuck and Mudd now joined Captain Midnight's in rattling a withering tune of death into the skies.

"Reminds me of the time Cap an'

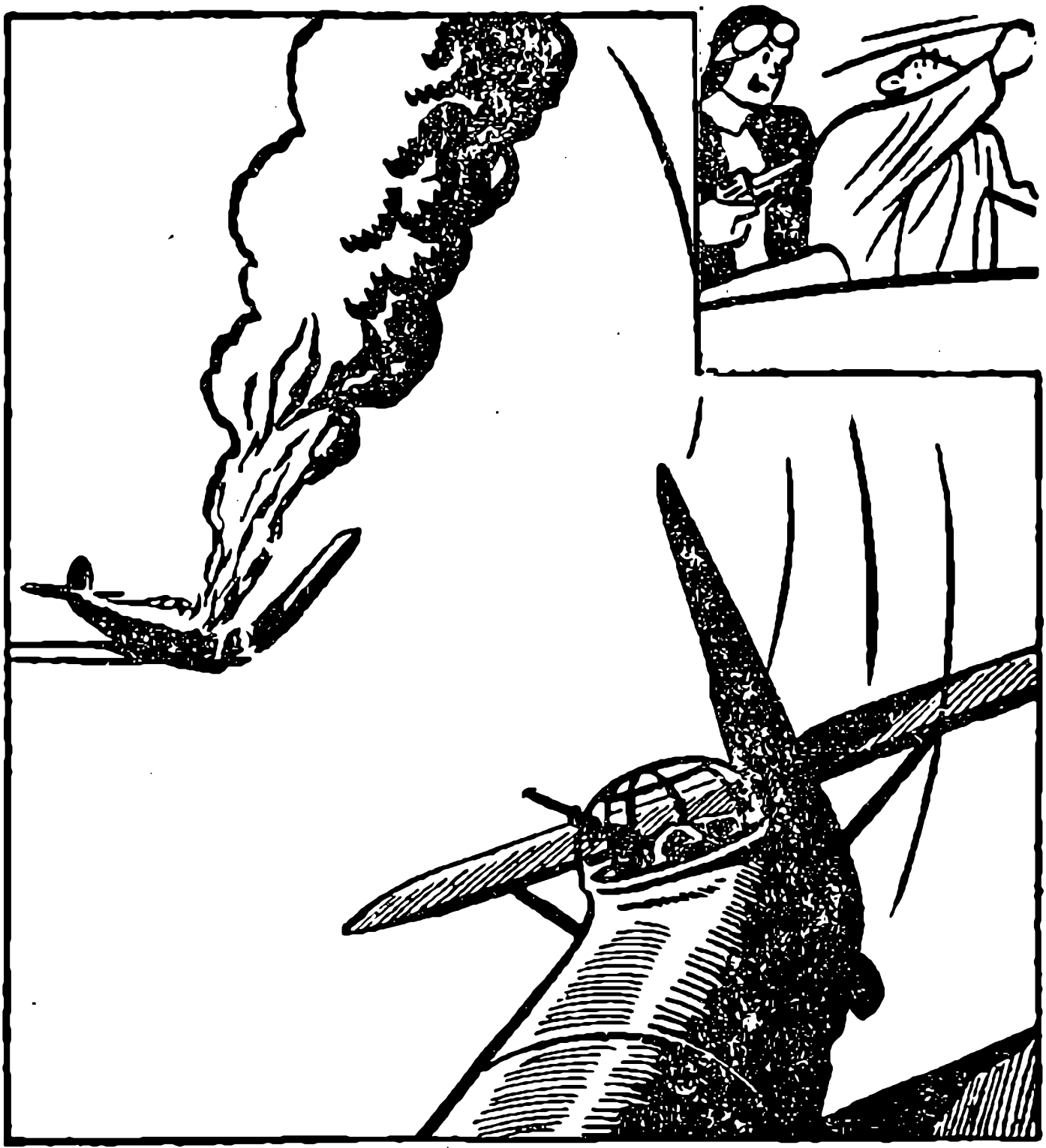


The Wolf Pilots Were Gaining

I flew to Chungking in that ship we took from the invaders," Mudd said, wiping the sweat from his face. "Oh, gosh!"

His exclamation came as a row of bullet holes appeared in the side of the plane above his head. He dived to the trigger of his gun again and started sending lead at the attacker. A long stream of smoke from the ship marked Ichabod Mudd's revenge.

Joyce at the controls kept the



The Plane Wobbled

plane zipping and zooming as it fled from the Wolf Pilots. It was a losing battle and Joyce knew it. Sooner or later a bullet would strike a vulnerable spot and the airship would dive into the ocean. But the girl gritted her teeth and kept the plane moving.

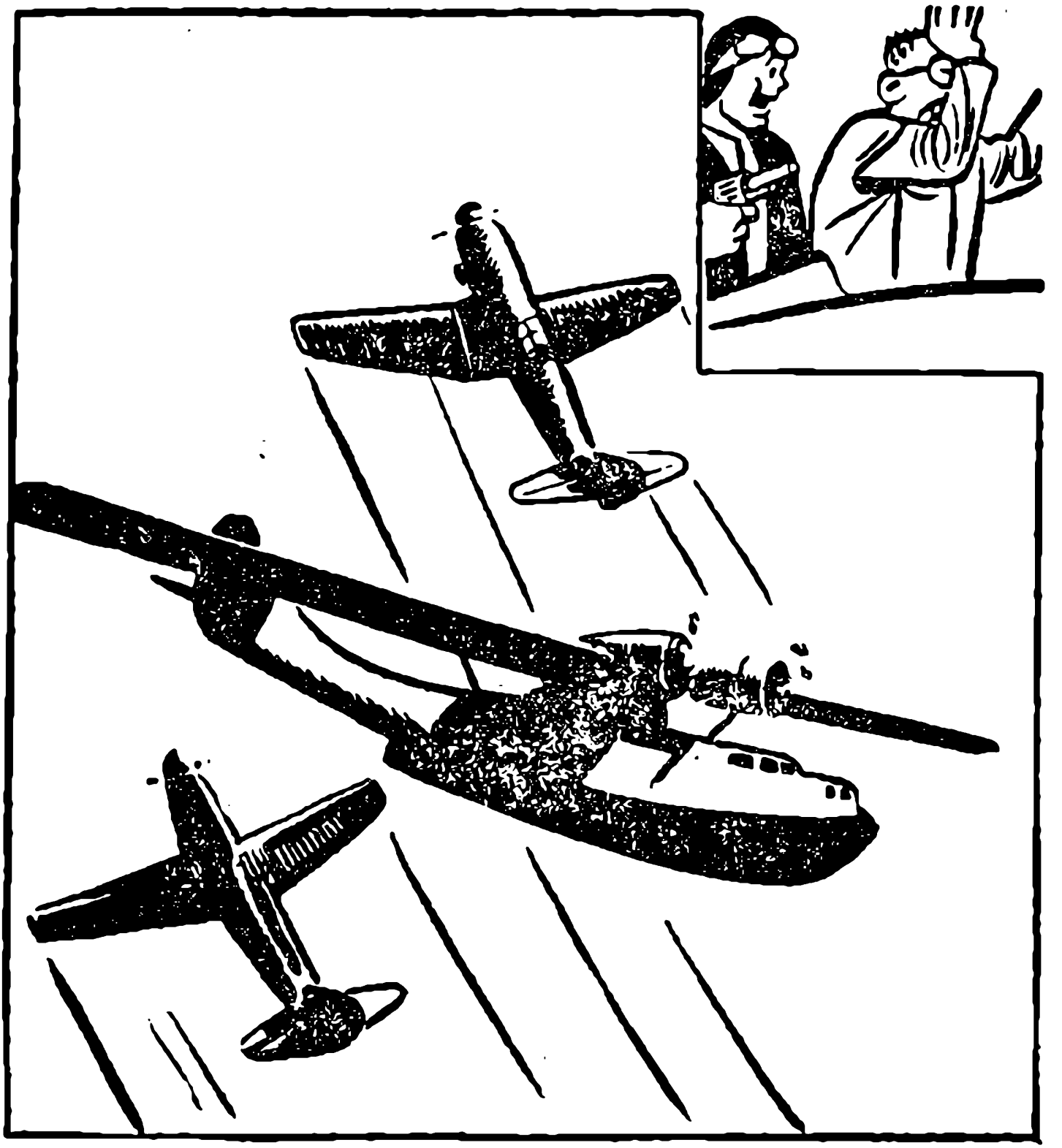
A cry came from Captain Midnight that sent chills through Chuck's bones. The captain had been hit. A moment later a reassuring message came over the com-

Joyce Kept the Plane Zooming

munication phone:

"Only a nick in the leg," Captain Midnight said. And a moment later: "I got him!"

The heavy toll among the Wolf Pilots was due primarily to the recklessness of the foe. These pilots, many of them Nazis and Japs, had been taught that death in battle was the surest way to a reward in the next life. They seemed eager to meet the deadly fire from the American ship.

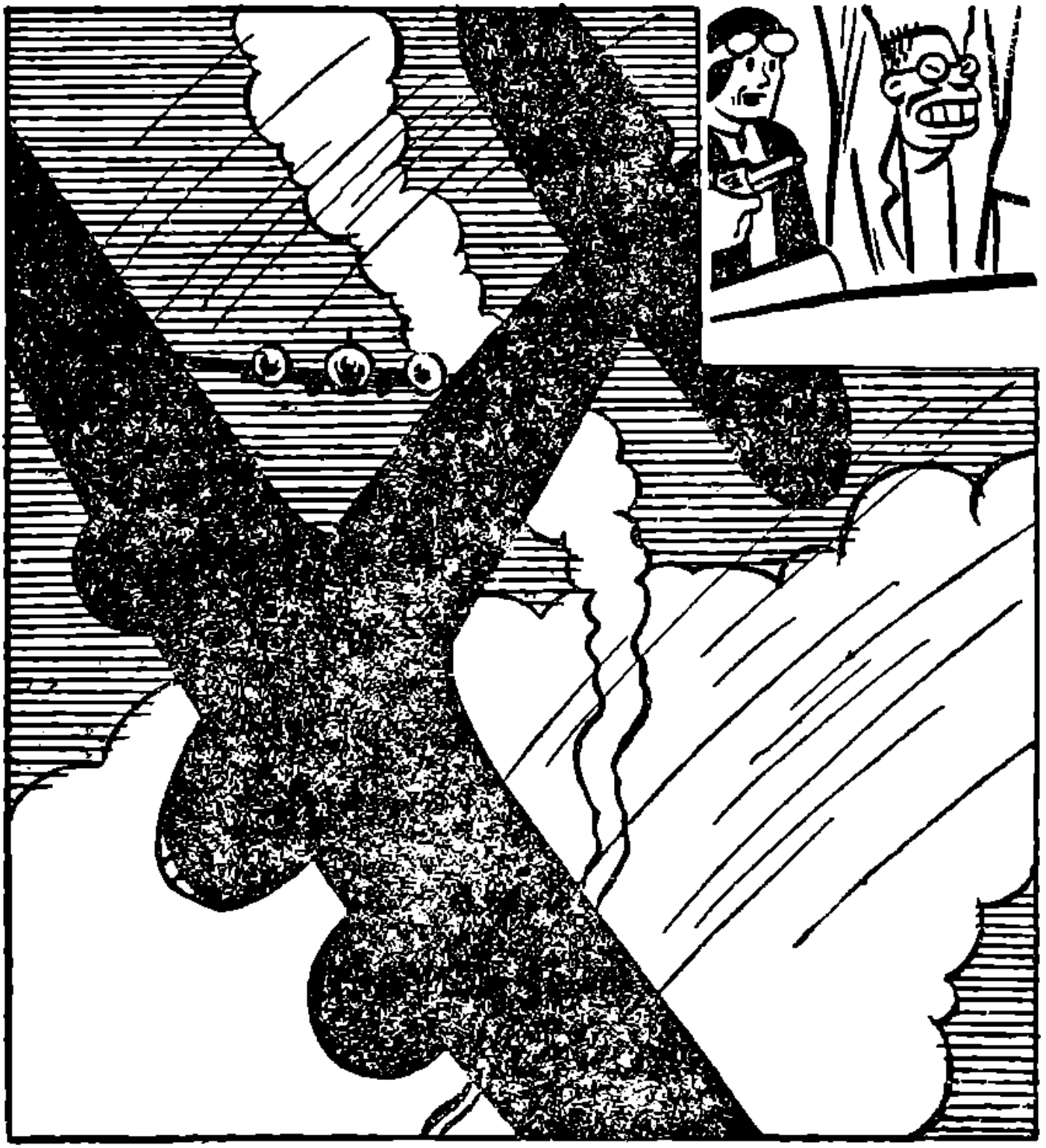


It Was a Losing Battle

"We can't hold out much longer," Chuck said.

"We don't have to!" Joyce suddenly cried. "Look!"

In the east another swarm of planes was coming to meet them. Captain Midnight's foresight had brought relief. During the hours he had been sending out radio warnings, the Secret Squadron men on the islands of the Pacific had been getting ready and flying out to meet their commander.

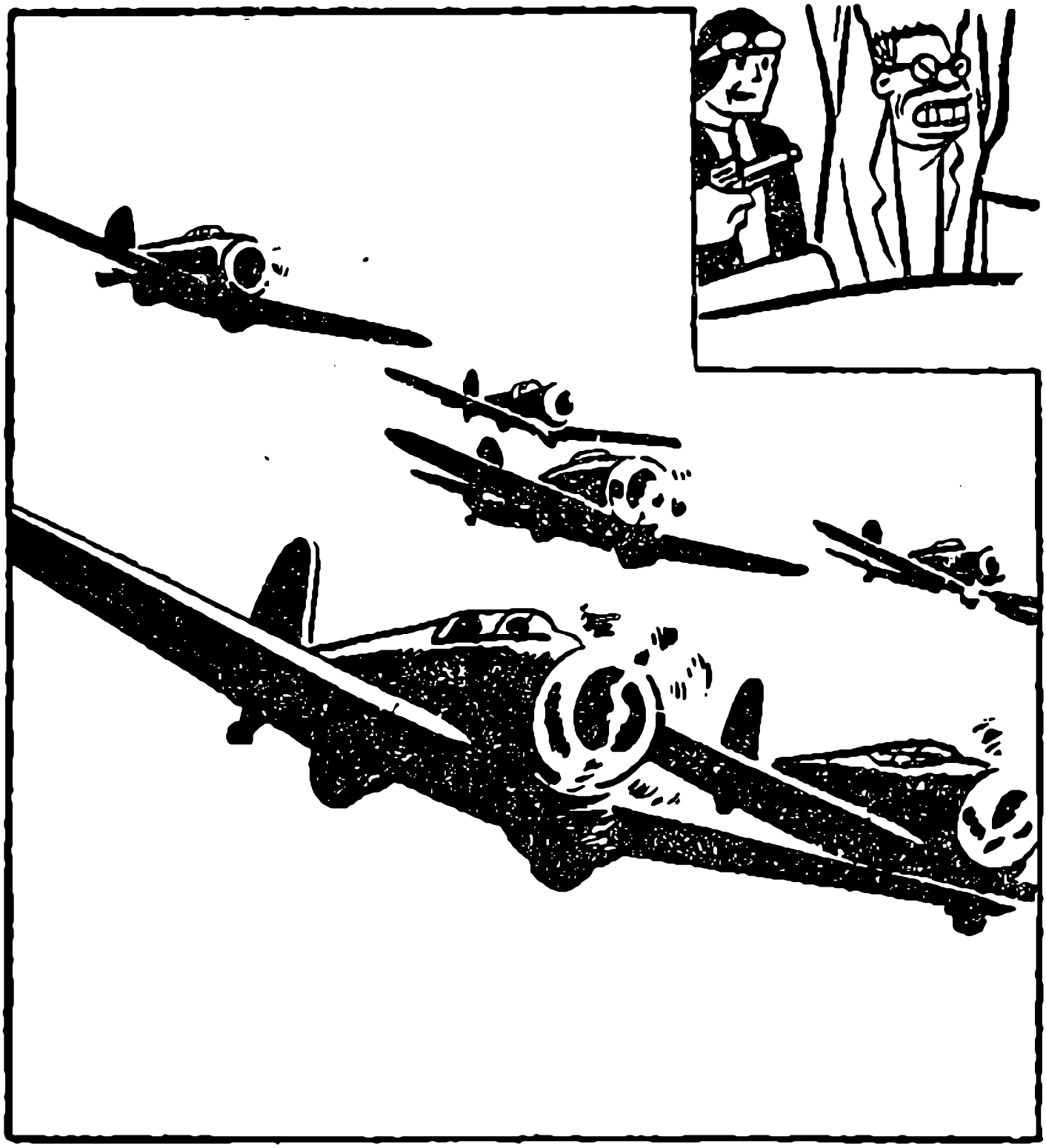


"We Can't Hold Out Much Longer."

Now they were here, with guns full of ammunition, and eager to send the invader limping home.

Suddenly the whole ocean seemed alive with planes. Hundreds of craft zipped, zoomed and dived as the two fleets met.

For a moment the squadron leader's plane was in the thick of the fighting. Then Joyce heard a voice beside her. She turned and saw Captain Midnight standing there. His shirt was torn and there was



The Secret Squadron Was Coming

blood on his trousers. He was wounded, but not badly.

"Let me have the controls, Joyce," he said. "There's something special we've got to do."

Joyce moved aside and Captain Midnight took the controls. He wheeled the plane and headed back through the melee.

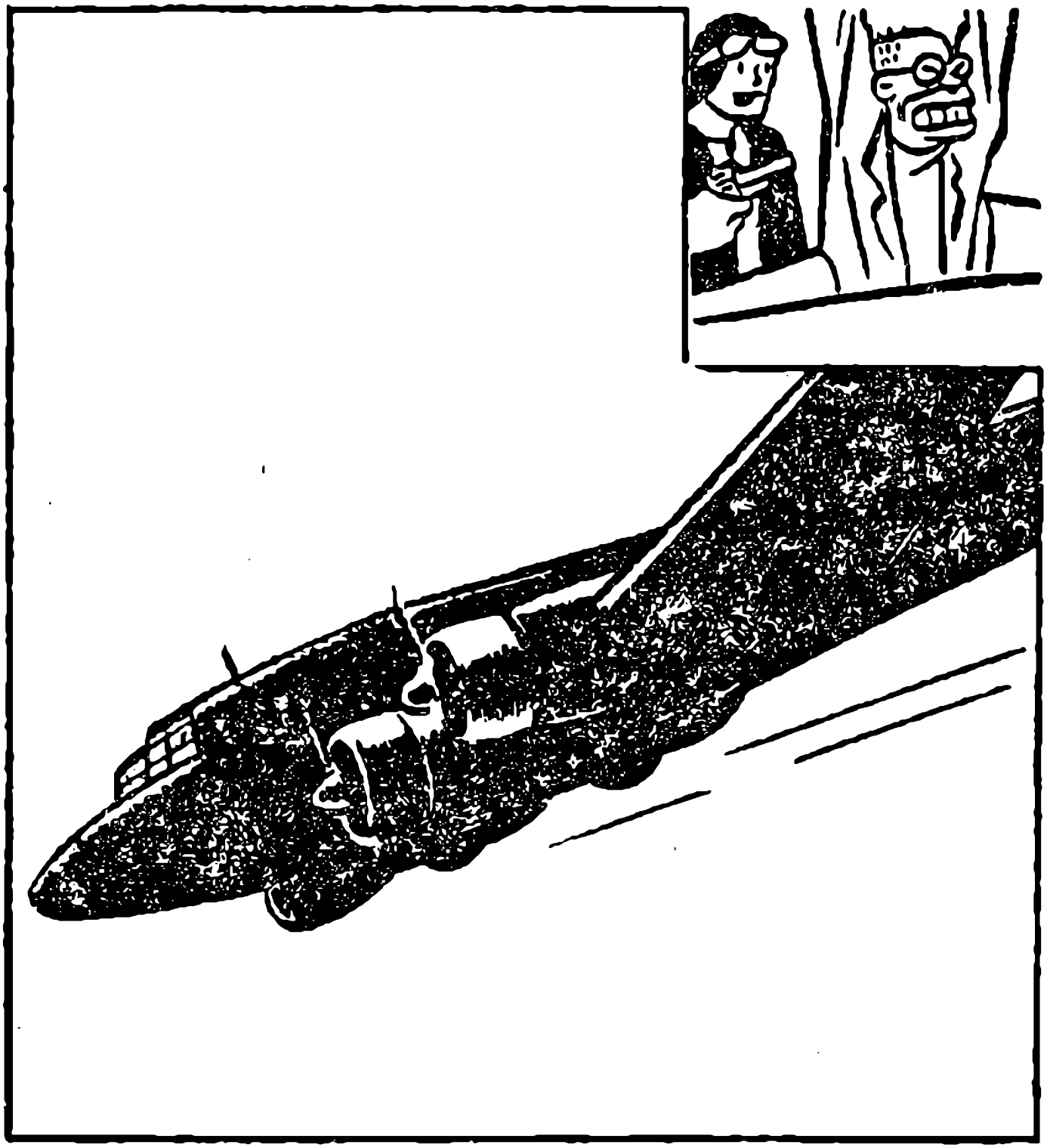
Chuck and Mudd kept their guns chattering as the huge plane waded through the thick of the fighting toward the rear. There, follow-

The Two Squadrons Met

ing the fighting, was a huge four-motored plane. It was the same ship that had stopped in Bias Bay.

Toward this craft, Captain Midnight directed his flight. He was above it and now he dived. At the same time he started the wing guns firing.

The Barracuda's pilot saw the onslaught, but it was too late. For an instant the four-motored plane tried to dodge. Then it opened fire on the American. But already the

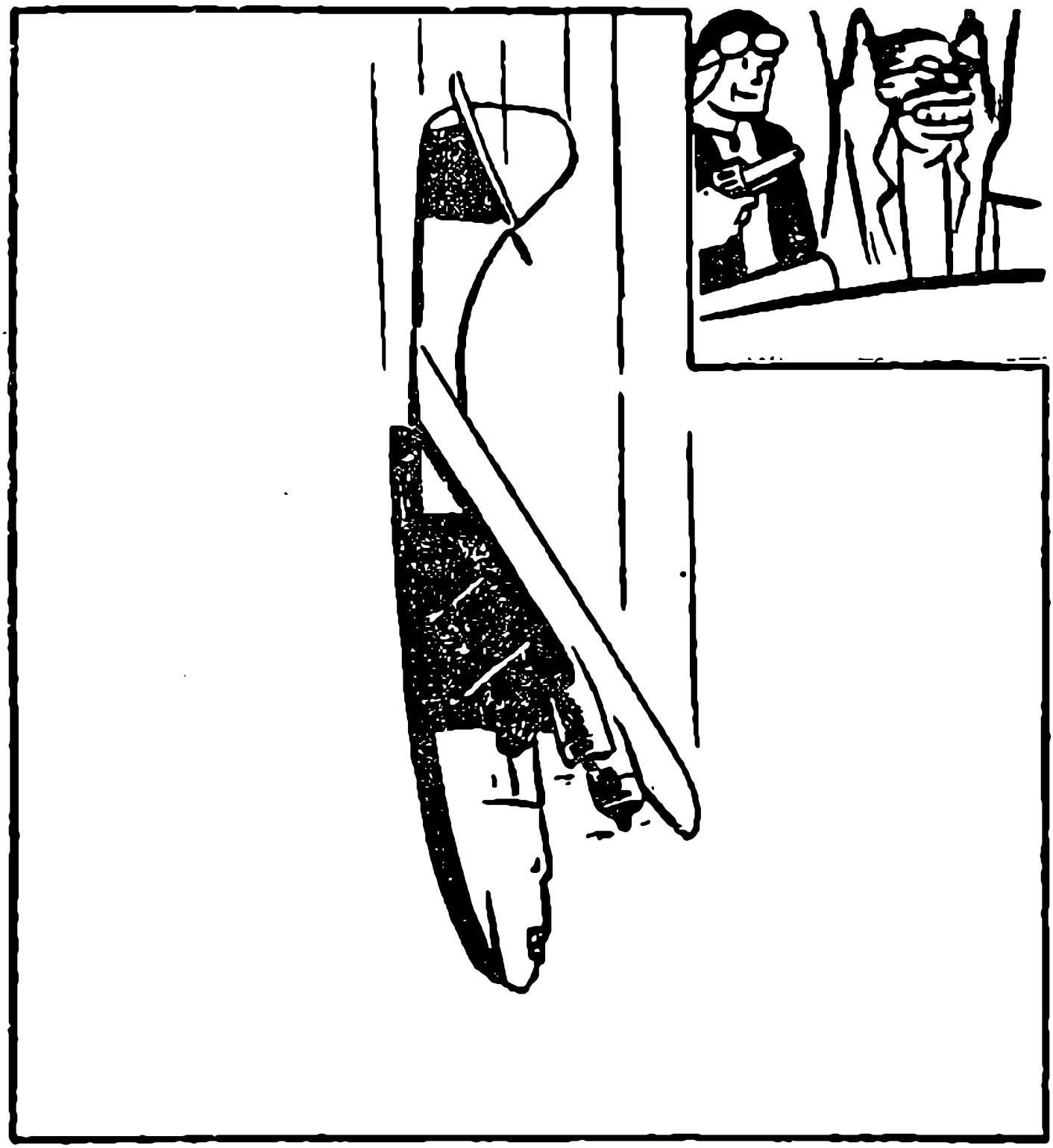


It Was the Same Big Ship

machine-gun bullets were striking the Oriental plane. Bits of fuselage seemed to fly away from the wings. The motors were pounded by slugs from the guns.

The ship wavered and then slipped downward. Smoke and flames shot from the crippled engines. As Captain Midnight and Joyce watched, they saw no parachutes appear below the falling plane.

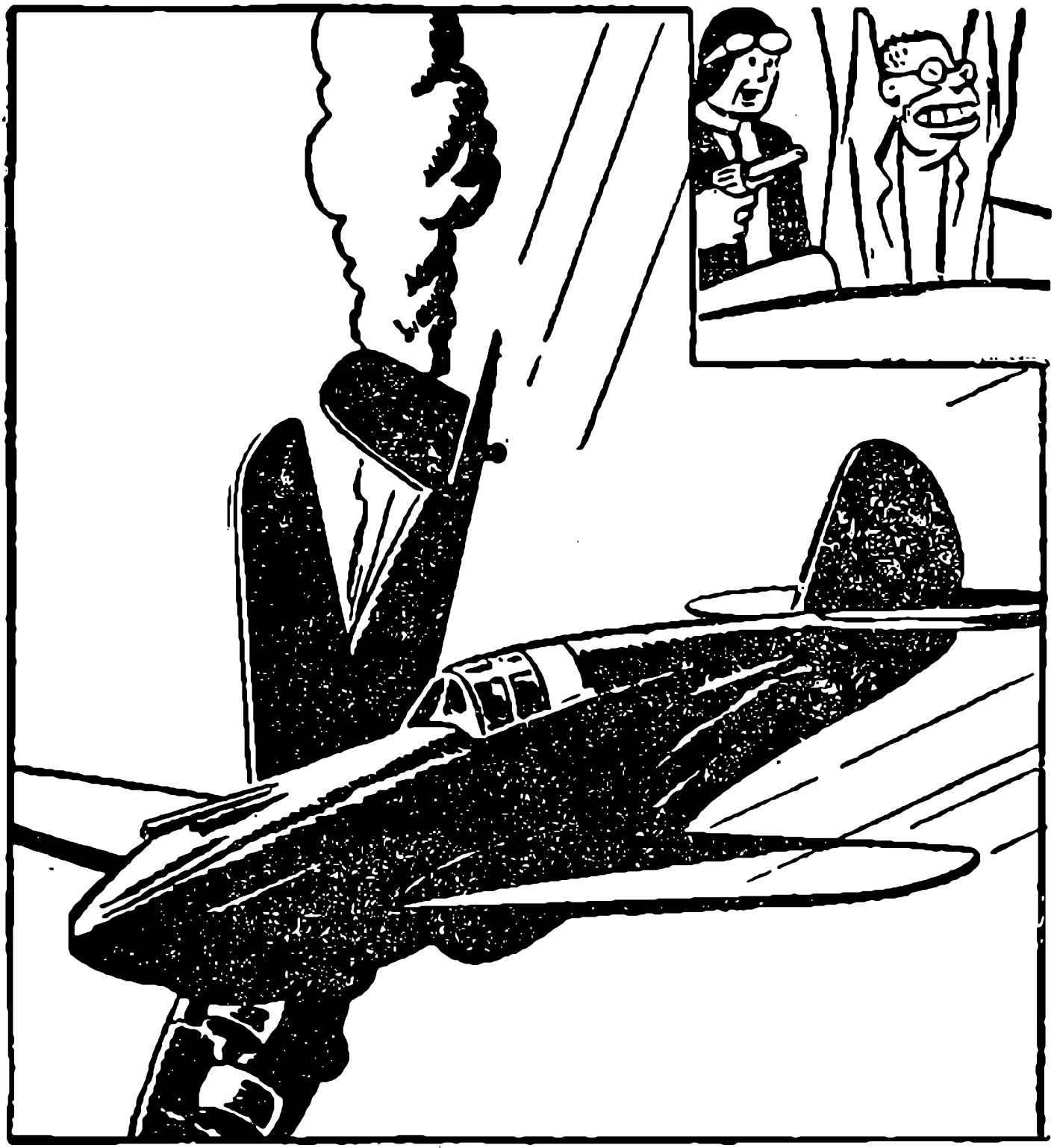
"That will end a great deal of future trouble in the Far East."



He Dived at the Plane

Captain Midnight said quietly.

He did not add what Joyce already knew. The battle that had taken place was merely a fight between unofficial battlers, but it would lead to big results in the American government's war policy. The actual truth was a victory for the Secret Squadron. It had saved the most important western fortress of the United States from another deadly bombing and it had dealt a decisive blow to the aggres-



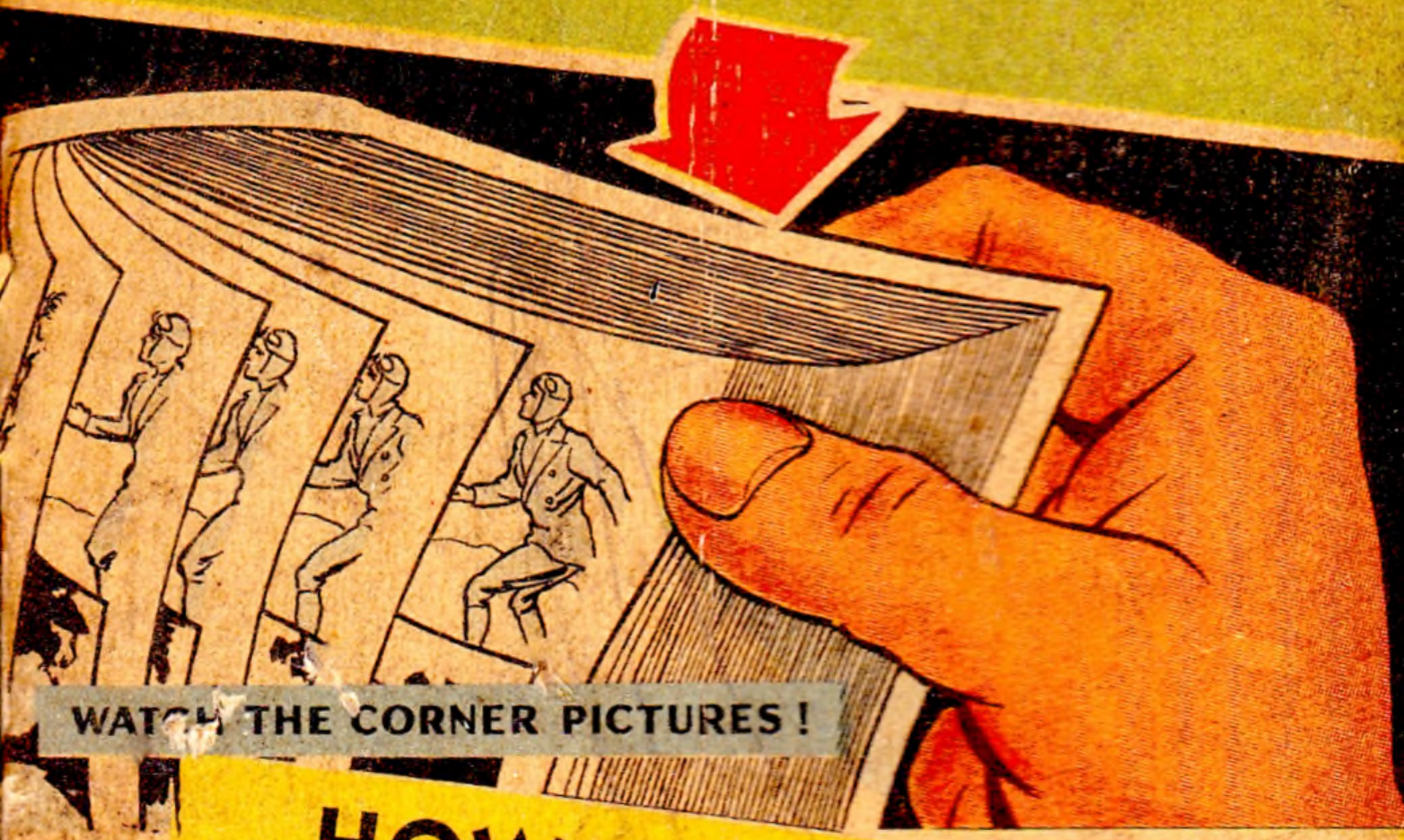
The Ship Wavered

sive aims of the dictator nations.

Honolulu still was a fortress of democracy, unscathed from what might have been a new, more shattering blow.

Captain Midnight had struck another blow in the fight for freedom and all that he and his fellow Americans held dear.

See 'em Move-



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